

CASTE THREE



GERTRUDE
M
SHIELDS

Al P.

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CASTE THREE



She was intimately appealing

CASTE THREE

BY
GERTRUDE M. SHIELDS

WITH FRONTISPIECE
By FLORENCE GARDNER



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TO
EDITH EATON ALEXANDER,
MOST DELIGHTFUL OF FRIENDS,
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

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CASTE THREE

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CHAPTER I

UP to the second before the train pulled out of the Sixty-seventh Street station, the Pullman was the exclusive possession of a gray-eyed, dark-haired, thin-legged youth who was intent upon a figure outside his window. He was watching a young man outside, an oldish young man with jolly blue eyes and a bright smile. The latter also had curly hair, which was publicly to be observed because the jolly young man was holding his derby — a new autumn one of great glossiness of finish — in his hand.

Just as the train gave a premonitory lurch another young man appeared in the doorway and tossed his bag into the car with a commotion which distracted the attention of the only other occupant from his brother on the platform. The newcomer removed his hat to wipe his forehead and grinned good-naturedly, thereby causing the thin-legged youth to miss giving a last wave of his hand to the man being left behind. This disgruntled him, because he was very fond of his brother Paul and might not see him again for some time.

Hewitt Stevenson's presence in the Pullman was not due to any desire to relieve himself of superfluous wealth. The extra charges engendered by his riding in the clean, well-ventilated car, undisturbed by a fried-chicken-and-banana-eating traveling public such as is informally at home in a day-coach, would make a disproportionately large hole in the small amount remaining after the purchase of a ticket from Chicago to Alton, Indiana. Following his own cautious impulses, he would have shunned the Pullman, but Paul had led him into that section of the train, deposited the bag on a seat, and got off without a thought, seemingly, of any other course. He had, however, thought to warn Hewitt from the platform, through a window raised for the purpose, that porters expected tips and punished people who forgot to give them.

The brown bag placed by Paul upon a seat was worn off into yellow spots. It could hardly be called a respectable bag. It looked like a bag that had seen hard service. And it had. Paul had carried it when he first began to travel for the wholesale grocery firm of Mayer, Bergstrom & Mayer, Chicago, U. S. A., long before he had been advanced to the position of city salesman for the same firm. That had been five years before, but the bag was thought good enough for Hewitt to carry on this journey.

Hewitt himself had been in charge of the remainder of his baggage, namely, an overcoat. The overcoat had much in common with the bag, although it was not a remnant of Paul's traveling days. It was Hewitt's

own property. He had not intended wearing it another winter, but then, his plans for September had not included a journey to Alston, and the morning when he and Paul had left the rooming-house where they had lived for the past five years was chilly with the breath of a cold lake breeze. So he had carried the coat. Anyway, it could scarcely have been crowded into the brown bag which bulged conspicuously on one side. The bulge was the external indication that at the last moment he had inserted two tennis-balls which were not new but might still be of use if one only played tennis for exercise. He forgot that he had left his battered racket with Paul. The balls were no evidence of Hewitt's enthusiasm for tennis. He played very badly. He always objected to games because there were rules attached, and he had a great objection to rules. But of course one must exercise,—infrequently.

The train sped away to the south, and the late arrival stood looking in vain for a porter. He seemed to expect the latter might be concealed behind a seat, for he continued to stand, though tossed from side to side by the train's motion, and to look up and down the car as though, Hewitt thought cattishly, he could not sit down until assisted by some one. When the porter did appear, he surprised the young man by coming up behind him, causing the passenger to start and then grin needlessly. As he turned to confront the porter the grin deepened, if that were possible.

"Howdy, Sam," said the young man. "That's my

bag." He pointed to a pretentious alligator piece at his feet.

"My name ain't Sam," said the porter, presumably in his native dialect, "but that's all right, Boy. Wheh 'd yuh wanta sit?"

"Up front here's all right."

The young man watched the colored servitor toss the pretentious bag into the rack above a nearby seat, and then proceeded to arrange his back and head and legs in the chair, much to the surprise of the one spectator who was capable of drawing conclusions from his observations. Hewitt was astounded that the other was able to arrange himself thus without aid.

The train moved swiftly past the lakes, swampy rivers, woods, bare fields, and towns and villages that succeed the smoky environs of Chicago on a journey into Indiana and that make up the scenery of the northern part of that state. Hewitt intermittently read a Chicago morning paper, was aware of the lolling person in the car with him, and thought. When the items in the news-sheet ceased to stimulate his mental processes, he followed the streams of thought started by some passing scene, although he pursued none of these to a logical conclusion.

"Get your lunch in the diner," Paul had told him at the same moment that he had reminded him of the tip. "A little extravagance won't hurt you, and anyway, you won't get into Alston until after three o'clock. Besides, you want to demand such things for yourself. Then you'll get more in the end."

He was relieved when the train drew up at eleven and his companion of the Pullman got off, the obsequious porter following hard on his heels with the pretentious alligator-bag. Hewitt breathed more freely after he had seen the top of the young man's head disappear past the window of the moving train and the porter emerge into the car again. He had n't much liked that young man. He was too well-dressed, too urbane with the urbanity of small towns, and Hewitt had another thrill of that cattish variety afflicting the best of people at times when the destination of the objectionable one was seen to be a mere village of indescribable dinginess set flamboyantly on a muddy river that looked ashamed of its protégé.

An added reason for anathema was that the young man had dozed during the two hours from Chicago. He had n't even had a newspaper or a book to read. He had *intended* dozing; that was clear.

Hewitt himself now folded his newspaper carefully and placed it on top of his bag. Then he pulled a soft, leather-bound book from his pocket and perused it when the monotony of the bare fields grew tiresome. The book was Keats' "Selected Poems."

The young man interrupted his reading of the "Ode to Autumn" for a moment when the first call for dinner rang from the front of the car. He continued to read, however, since he must n't seem too anxious about dinner.

The second call caused him to make his way nonchalantly into the diner. At the entrance he stopped

and stamped lightly, in order to bring the bottom of one trouser leg down to its proper position on his ankle. This pause also emphasized his appearance of being entirely at his ease in the face of a dining-car and an à la carte service. He ran his fingers through his pompadour to make sure that an evasive lock that frequently was not in place was now submissive. He gained a seat after being jerked from side to side in a way to bring a smile close to the surface. It did not come entirely to the surface, however. Hewitt was too quick for it.

Frankly expressed, Hewitt Stevenson's idea of travel was "fun," but Hewitt Stevenson's age made such frank expression an impossibility. He would have liked to leave the impression with the two men who were already engaged with a steak and its accessories at the other end of the car that he was a trifle bored with this traveling, but that he was determined to be valiant in the presence of a necessary evil. By limiting his order to simpler dishes, like a club-sandwich, coffee, and a light dessert, he had enough change left from a dollar bill for the tip. He felt a certain pride in spending the entire dollar at one blow, as it were, and yet there was present in him a vague discontent with a world which made his acceptance of such limitations desirable. It was so easy to imagine yourself luxuriously the spender.

But his interest in the flood of impressions pouring in upon him distracted his attention from an enforced but not obtrusively distasteful poverty.

If Hewitt Stevenson's soul could have been examined and analyzed at that date in his development, what would it have revealed?

Less than a year later, when he was writing poetry to, but principally in secret *about*, Mary Young, he had a tingling sensation before dawn one morning of seeing light, gray, shapeless bubbles, airy as the mist which lay over the grass and interlaced itself with the branches of nearby trees, dancing back and forth outside his window. Only half-awake, still full of the heaviness of sleep, he thought that one form, brighter and airier than the rest, flung itself hither and thither through the half-light. The others followed it. That gay piece of nothingness, indescribably lovely and magnetic, was the soul of Mary Young; those gray forms were the souls of those Alstonians who were led by Mary Young.

If Hewitt's soul of this September day could have floated before his eyes, it, too, would have been light, gray, and bubbly, light as the mist which earlier in the day had lain over these rivers and lakes and farms in the northern part of his native state. It would have been a jelly-fish kind of soul. It would not have been the firm little prejudiced red soul of his childhood, when right and wrong were divided by a strong line and there were no difficulties about greater and lesser goods; when sin was sin and holiness was holiness, according to the emphatic ruling of the Methodist church. Adolescence and Chicago and contact with men who thought had changed all that. At one mo-

ment it would have shown the blue and gold of great ideals and fine emotions, at another the pink prettiness of trivial content with the commonplace, and at another the brownness of dull dissatisfaction with life as it came to him. In time it might pass out of this jelly-fish state and become a permanently beautiful, bright soul. It might sink back into the grayness of mist, the infinite from which it took its being, without ever achieving distinctive color. It might remain an indefinite mass, now and again putting forth protuberances, like a one-celled animal, to touch the grayness of other one-celled souls, and then withdrawing these fingers into itself as it became increasingly aware of the great law governing the essential aloneness of every soul. Being the essence of Hewitt Stevenson, it would never long remain the same. It was a groping soul, reaching and retreating, expanding and depressing. Beauty, in another age and amid other souls intent upon the discovery of the beautiful, would have been its law. In the great Middle West, in that expanse of fertile country extending from the Appalachians to the mighty Mississippi, that land watered by innumerable streams, covered with growing grain in long, hot summers, with woods and vigorous cities and a network of railroads and traction lines — what then of the soul of Hewitt Stevenson?

During the hours between his luncheon and his arrival in Alston, Hewitt was not at all concerned with his soul. He might think about it, certainly. He might listen to Letsky, the young Jewish radical who

had been in the habit of haranguing violently and at length at the back of Woody's book-store, speak on the subject of the soul in general, although Letsky had such a supply of sociological knowledge that the soul was likely to be relegated to old age and elderly Brown-ing societies and ministers of the gospel for discussion. But in September of the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twelve you could not have persuaded him to talk of his own soul.

"Next stop, Alston! Next stop, Alston!" called a voice from the front of the car. This was later in the afternoon, when the landscape had begun to pall and traveling had become less zestful than the young man had at first thought it.

Hewitt immediately became afraid that he would not be ready when Alston was reached and that the fast train speeding over the level stretch of central Indiana would hurry on without depositing him on the Alston platform, the goal of his journey. He reached for his overcoat and cap in the rack above and shifted uneasily in his seat, leaning forward to regard the rolling prairie-farms prominently decorated with large cylindrical silos, white farmhouses of varying degrees of pretentiousness, and enormous barns of unvarying pretentiousness.

"Brush?"

Hewitt obediently stood up, with the feeling that porterly attentions were, after all, a matter of payment and that his money was as efficacious in securing service as another's. He stamped again to push down the

elusive trouser leg that had before shown a tendency to cling to his calf. He dropped some small change into the hand of his black temporary retainer and had his bag deposited at the door.

Hewitt had expected to be met by Grace or his father. When you have been in Chicago for five years, absent from the bosom of your family, you naturally expect to be met at a railway station. Besides, the bosom of his particular family had not resided in Alston when the youngest son and brother had left for the large city of the lakes. He was a stranger in this town.

The station was manifestly an inadequate and soon-to-be-discarded structure, if one were to judge by the piles of "dressed" stone which loomed up from the farther end and an expression of "My time is done; long live the king!" on the part of the building itself. This expression was the result of the position of a bay-window, two doors, and the platform, all of which made one think of a nose, two eyes, and a forlorn mouth, the last being responsible for its forlornity to a sloping downward of itself into runways.

A taxi chugged in solitary spinsterhood at the end of the station, its driver nowhere in sight, but possibly frequenting the saloon across the way. A baggage-man ran a truck hurriedly down the platform to receive some trunks, crates, and boxes from the train. The day-coaches ejected a tousled, weeping boy, three fussily dressed women, and a traveling salesman (to judge from a spick-and-spanness of apparel and a con-

temptuousness of mouth) who wanted to go on to Indianapolis but couldn't on account of the demands of business.

"Fourteenth and Jackson," Hewitt read in a notebook he took from his pocket.

So this was Alston, Indiana; population thirty-five thousand or thereabouts! The figures held little significance for one who had gone directly to Chicago from the farm at the age of fifteen. To the Chicago-bred, Alston was a small town or village. That it existed at all was of small interest to the busy places of the globe, unless, of course, your family adopted it as a place of residence. Then its existence was reluctantly admitted.

Down the center of the wide street running north and south from the station extended a single street-car track, and as Hewitt made his way in the direction indicated by a mumbling, tobacco-chewing baggage-man, a small electric-car clanged and jerked its way to the south, followed by a traction car of greater unwieldiness and more dignity. A large building housing a wholesale grocers' firm stood opposite the station. Numerous small business-houses,—drugstores, bicycle repair-shops, second-hand clothing and furniture stores, and restaurants,—lined Meridian Street on each side as he walked on for two or three blocks, before the larger buildings appeared to tell him that he was approaching the center of the business section.

A department-store occupied the first floor of a ten-story office-building on a corner where tracks from

east and west crossed those that Hewitt had already noticed. There was a majesty about the ten stories of this particular building, because of the contrast between it and its lower and older neighbors. An "interurban" crowded with passengers, even on the rear platform, rumbled north on the main street.

Hewitt was half-inclined to be surprised at the number of people who moved past him as he stood in front of the department-store, his bag on the pavement at his feet. A clean, plate-glass-windowed bank, a drug-store teeming with customers, and a cigar-store filled with men and boys, occupied the three corners of the intersecting streets. "Eleventh," he read on a cross-street sign. Farther along Meridian Street another department-store of four stories, painted white and marked on top in high, wire letters "The White House," drew his attention as he walked across the street, and he caught a glimpse of a dirty gray-stone court-house, surrounded by a green lawn and a stone coping lined with idlers, in the center of the "Square" several blocks to the north.

Hewitt entered the drug-store for a supplement to the indefinite help of his previous director. A group of youths in no way different from a thousand other youths in ready-to-wear garb whom Hewitt had been wont to pass every day on the streets of Chicago encircled the cigar-counter and the soda-fountain inside. They looked the newcomer over,—those who were not otherwise engaged,—with no curiosity, exhibiting no change in the content and self-sufficiency of their

attitude. He was not so well-dressed as they and was evidently a stranger, to judge from a bag and a folded overcoat which the September afternoon did not demand.

The young man's inquiry for Fourteenth and Jackson streets brought instructions about getting there. "A block west to the post-office and then three blocks south," said the girl in charge of the cigar-counter. She was courteous, but as uninterested as the young males around her.

Not that Hewitt was annoyed or more than cognizant of this indifference of Alston, Indiana, to his presence in its midst. He was a young man of some intellectual prestige in that part of Chicago dominated by an intellectual ideal. He was not, himself, concerned with drug-store loafers, or even habitués. He had come to Alston because an urgent letter from his father and a long talk with his brother Paul had convinced him that such a move might be wisdom. Therefore he thanked the girl and started to go.

"Heh, Canby!" shouted a tall, thin youth from the front of the store, and he shot down the tiled floor in pursuit of a plump boy who was in the act of swiftly and surreptitiously escorting a girl out by the side door. "Heh, I've got a date with Helen!"

The plump one did not pause, but hastened his footsteps and fairly leaping into an automobile at the curb, was in the act of driving off when his nimble pursuer jumped on the running-board and grabbed the girl by the arm.

"I've got a date with Helen myself, you boob!" the latter continued to aver. "Stop that car, you sneak thief!"

Hewitt, walking toward the post-office, was a spectator of this trouble over the eternal feminine. He smiled to himself when the plump boy in possession gave a hard push which dislodged the raging thin one from his position and sent him flying at a run back to the drug-store under the momentum gathered in his quick and unexpected step to the pavement. Hewitt could hear the laughs of the witnesses of this unhappy ending, who had hurried out of the drug-store to watch it.

The young man realized, on going south along a street marked Jackson, that he was practically retracing his steps to the station, although this street was lined not with business places, but with pleasant residences,—well-lawned abodes in front of which children were playing on roller-skates.

At Twelfth Street a stone Methodist church of some distinction stood next to a house built of the same material. It was evidently a parsonage. A pretty, dark-haired girl, arrayed in a trim suit and small hat, walked from the door of the latter, got into a pony-cart, and drove away, waving her hand to two women who were emerging from the church.

There were three houses on the various corners of Fourteenth and Jackson streets, but Hewitt had no trouble in selecting his father's. It was the kind of house he expected his father to live in. It was a brick

structure of that type erected in the Middle West during the mid-nineteenth century. From the front, — at an earlier day when the iron railings of the narrow front veranda were not rusted and broken and when the lightning-rod rising straight and high, with balls and curly-cues, had been an affair to congratulate the owner upon, — the house must have been considered an imposing addition to the residence section of a young but growing Alston. It rose two stories — tall stories that told of enormously high ceilings within. But from the side one saw the falseness of the front's promise. The remainder of the house wandered back indefinitely, being one story and roofed with slate, and it ended in a frame summer kitchen which seemed to cling helplessly to its brother rooms.

For five years the inhabitant of a city whose typical form in architecture is the brick or stone or stone-veneered apartment-building, Hewitt was not critical of the architecture of the house of his father's selection. He merely designated it, upon first glance, as ugly, and he lumped its defects in the cover-all term, "old-fashioned."

A straggly lawn, with a gnarled apple-tree too old to bear fruit, lay around the house. A coal-yard was seen to lie between it and the railroad, concealed partially from view by a high board fence. Hewitt felt a strong hatred well up in him against the house's surroundings. Dirty! Ugly! And to his twenty years the latter word conveyed an immense heap of opprobrium upon anything. An open lot opposite was

laid out in tennis-courts which could not, certainly, conceal the rear of the buildings facing on Meridian Street,—an expanse of dirty doorways, piles of barrels, rusted fire-escapes, and piles of paper.

The young man opened the door into the brick house hurriedly. After all, despite the lapse which not being met at the station hinted at, he had not seen his father, his grandfather, or Grace for five years, and his interest in them, which had waned in the interim, revived as he swung open the door.

"Hello, everybody!" he called, and started through the living-room.

A figure, scarcely discernible in the semi-twilight of the darkened room, moved from its position over the register of a hot-air furnace. The room was very warm, it seemed to Hewitt, fresh from the September sunshine outside.

"Hello, grandpa!" he said.

"How-do, Hewie?" answered a weak voice.
"Home?"

You might have thought from the words of the listless, cracked-voiced, old man that Hewitt had been away for the morning.

"Does n't seem exactly like home to me," the boy said, shaking the trembling hand his grandfather held out to him.

"We've moved since you was home, hain't we?"

Hewitt walked out through the dining-room, containing a heavy sideboard of intricate carving with a

streaked old mirror in the back, a heavy oak table with chairs to match, and a yellow plush "lounge," into the kitchen. This looked more like the old farm-house, this spotlessness of stove and table and cupboard. Even the cat sitting in the doorway wanted to become cleaner than any other cat in the world and went about accomplishing that end with a gusto which it interrupted to glance up at the new entrant. Immediately, however, it resumed operations on the next paw. A young man must not be allowed to think that his arrival at home after a five years' absence made any difference in the conduct of life among the resident householders. The cat's attitude was one of supreme indifference to all departures and arrivals, a feline self-content not to be pricked by any returning son, prodigal or puritan.

Grace was in the summer kitchen building a fire of kindling and small pieces of coal. At the sound of footsteps she, too, turned to glance at the newcomer, and then, like the cat, returned to her labor.

"Hello, Hewie!" she essayed, with marked placidity.

"Hello," Hewitt vouchsafed.

He was half-discomfited by the matter-of-factness with which his family was taking his reëntrance into their bosom. He knew that people died and were buried without the occurrence drawing a single sign of strong feeling from the Stevensons, but somehow he had expected his arrival to create more of a stir than death,—a death outside the family.

"I'm going to bake," said Grace, continuing to lay the chips of coal on the wood in the low stove.

Hewitt had intended to kiss Grace. He had felt that the emotional impregnability of the home-staying section of the Stevenson family was unsatisfactory and not up to new ideals of family affection which he had formed in Chicago from observation of other families. Mr. Woody always kissed Mrs. Woody every time he went home from the book-store, and although a sister was not a wife, of course, a kiss was not here amiss, so to speak.

But he did not kiss Grace. He picked up some scraps of wood from the floor and took charge of the fire, instead.

"Here, I'll do that. You go ahead and attend to your bread or pies or whatever you're making."

Grace glanced at him inquiringly. The Hewitt of five years before had grown up, she understood. He did not look at all like Paul, whose curly hair and ready smile Grace had always thought very becoming to a young man. Indeed, Paul was rather the family favorite, perhaps because of his long sojourn among other tribes. He was to Grace as near an ideal of manly beauty as she would ever develop. She had never had any "young man" of her own, and Paul had been accustomed to steal up to pull her hair, to pin up her dress in ludicrous folds, or to pinch her plump arms at unexpected moments in a way that pleased her immensely, even while she pretended to be greatly chagrined. Paul had a way about him, while

Hewitt had always been more serious. Also, the latter's gray eyes, large, long-lashed, almost blurred by dark lashes, and with a dreamy look in them which one did not associate with the Stevenson side of the family, were in annoying contrast to his dark hair, worn a trifle long and combed back smoothly from his forehead, although it did not always stay back for long. In fact, there was one strand which habitually fell over his right temple, giving him a wild and unkempt appearance.

"Hewie was always all eyes," Grace thought to herself, "but they look kind o' funny now with his hair, since it's turned darker. It seems like his eyes ought to be darker, too." She thus dispensed with the feature which was his chief claim to beauty. She also noticed his extreme length of leg with disapproval. Paul was shorter and heavier in proportion, more manly. This length made Hewitt look awkward and thin. She remembered with a sort of pride, however, while disparaging his right to be called a handsome young man, that her grandfather on her mother's side had often been said to resemble "Honest Abe" Lincoln in appearance. Hewitt would have to drink lots of milk and eat potatoes while he was home. Then, maybe, his eyes would n't look so important.

"Where's father?" Hewitt asked, when he had finished with the fire.

"Out at the farm. He's been like a chicken with its head off ever since we moved over here, and grandpa and I got him to buy twenty acres of garden-

land out here five miles. He drives out every day. He does more work on it than the man he's rented it to on shares. He's never been just satisfied, Hewie, since we sold out." Grace frowned and turned the drafts of the stove to heat the oven. "But where we could n't get him to read a farm-journal ten years ago, — maybe there were n't so many then, — now he wants to take up every new notion that comes out in that big 'weekly' on gardening. I never saw his beat!"

Hewitt moved away from the stove. The heat poured out in a volume.

"I guess that will burn," he said.

"It's all right. You run and look at the rest of the house. You've never been in it before, have you?"

He selected a peeled apple from the pile in the pan on the table and set off on a tour of inspection.

"Cold, grandpa?" he asked his grandfather in passing.

The old man blinked uncertainly and turned his eyes toward Hewitt.

"Perty cold for September. Used to have warm Septembers in Indiana, but here lately they've been getting colder. I s'pose the 'lectricity in the telephones and interurbans and lights makes a difference in the atmosphere."

He dropped back in his chair and fell to dozing again.

Hewitt ventured no farther than the door leading into the "parlor." Its stiff cleanliness was not inviting. It resembled the parlor of the farm-house where

he had lived until he was fifteen. In that far-off childhood he had never been comfortable in a single one of the horsehair-covered, large, respectable chairs. He had tried them one by one on the various occasions when a funeral, the visit of a successful relative, or that of the minister had caused the damp, unheated parlor to be opened for living purposes. A red ingrain carpet was on the floor. A "stand," marble-topped and holding a Bible used only for birth and death statistics and a limp-leather gift edition of "Lucile," stood in one corner. Hewitt remembered that a neighbor-girl had long before given that latter piece of airy literature to Paul for Christmas. She had selected it, Paul had told him, for the beauty of the binding, rather than for the artistry of its poetic expression.

The ceiling fulfilled the promise of the exterior of the house. It was extraordinarily high, and the electric-light wires, extending from one corner to the middle of it, hung down and ended in an unshaded bulb. A bay-window looking to the south held two thrifty ferns in bright colored jardinières and a rubber-plant similarly potted. A begonia, covered with pink, waxy blossoms, stood on the window-sill, being partially concealed by the long, heavy lace curtains with their elaborate design of intertwined poppies in heavy white thread.

Hewitt moved on into the first floor bed-rooms. They contained old-fashioned oak furniture — broad beds covered with snow white "spreads" and headed

by round bolsters, high, marble-topped bureaus, and the same heavy lace curtains.

"Been upstairs?" Grace asked, when he emerged into the kitchen again. "Kind o' nice, is n't it? You can have the north room upstairs, Hewie. I've always had the south. It's pleasanter, but I'd 'a' had to change all my things."

"Change? I should say not! The north one suits me."

"How 'd you like high school?" Grace asked, as she pared the dough from the edge of a pie she was finishing.

Hewitt stopped.

"I liked it. I'm glad I went."

"You were n't so much older than the rest of the boys, were you? I thought you would n't be. You were always bright in the country school."

"Nineteen is about the average for graduation, and I'm twenty."

"I'm glad you went. An education is something nobody can take away from you. You might unpack your trunk before father comes, if you think you'll stay for a while. Oh, they did n't bring it from the station, did they?"

"I just brought a bag," he explained.

"You're going back to Chicago, are you?" she asked quickly, but resumed her work on the pie immediately. There was a hint of consternation in her stopping her work for a second which seeped into Hewitt's consciousness, dulled where his family's feel-

ings were concerned but grown more acute by reason of his long absence. He watched her with a faint furtiveness in his eyes as she padded back and forth from the kitchen to its summer substitute.

Grace was of that fair-skinned, reddish-haired type which is flabbily heavy and abounds in forehead and dim, almost indistinguishable, freckles. Her plump white hands and her white wide forehead always seemed about to break out into a perspiration, but never did. Hewitt noticed this trait about her now. There had been a time in his boyhood when he had thought Grace pretty, but her pale eyes and porous skin gave him a different impression now. Despite the new note of sympathy and self-stimulated affection for his family, born of a conviction that one should have that sort of feeling for one's blood relatives, he found himself being critical of her "doughiness," as he mentally and involuntarily referred to her plump softness.

His outward expression of this notice of her "doughiness," however, was limited to a straightening of his thin shoulders and a setting of his jaw, already firm beyond the requirements of manly distinction. These movements were performed with a vague idea of fighting an unwelcome family inheritance, although upon further thought he was able to remember that he favored his mother, a nervous, energetic woman prone to alternate between strenuous bursts of energy and a silent, undemonstrative moodiness. She had guided not only her own life, but had set her mark upon her husband and her offspring.

Hewitt and Paul looked more like their mother's side of the family, Charles Stevenson had always said with pride. He admired the deceased Mrs. Stevenson with increasing fervor as the years following her death grew more numerous. He had given her a loyal admiration, although too little monetary sign of it, while she was yet alive and engaged in directing the affairs of the farm-household in a way to make possible his financial success. He often referred now to her power of "managing things."

In reply to Grace's questions about his intention of returning to Chicago, Hewitt told her that he wanted to talk to his father before he could be sure. The furtiveness in his glance, veiled and unacknowledged, was due to his recognition that she might want him to stay at home, whether or not his father acquiesced to his plans. He did n't want to stay long in Alston, he was sure, although he knew he had better follow Paul's advice.

"Do you like the girl Paul's going to marry?" asked his sister above the noise of the slamming oven-door.

"Yes. She's awfully pretty. Her father has some money, too. He's a manufacturer."

"That's what Paul said in his letter."

"He makes metal novelties."

"That's what Paul said."

"They're going to live up on the north side in a nice apartment. Sun-parlor in it, and sleeping porch, and so on."

Grace stopped in the doorway to look at him as he said this.

"How much rent?" she asked, resolutely determined to know and judge the girl of Paul's selection.

"Fifty or sixty, I think."

His sister closed her mouth to show her opinion of Paul's prospective wife.

"It would have been better if Paul had waited and helped you through college before he got married," she said.

"I did n't want him to. He's done enough for me the way it is. He would n't have got that girl if he'd had to wait even a year to help me. She had lots of men who liked her."

"She'd have waited for Paul if she'd thought enough of him."

"May be. You see, though, a man has to step lively to get a girl like that. She liked Paul especially because she said he was intelligent. Paul reads a good deal. He wants money, but he knows there are a lot of other things in the world, too. Paul could talk as well as the university men who boarded at the same place we did."

This unusual length of comment on Hewitt's part to a member of his family exhausted his conversational facilities, and he wandered out into the back-yard and around through the long, uneven grass to the front veranda. He whistled softly an air which had risen above the Chicago noises during the summer, without realizing that he was throwing his esthetic musical

taste to the winds by doing so. But even whistling could not entirely drive away the queer faint-heartedness which was closing in upon him as the sun dropped lower and late afternoon, with its melancholy suggestion of other late afternoons in pleasanter surroundings amid congenial companionship, passed gradually into early evening. He kept watching the neglected tennis-courts, the board fence about the coal-yard, and the shabby cottages across the way, with a growing hatred for such ugliness. In Chicago he had never been so depressed by the same type of ugliness, perhaps because he had never felt responsible for it. Here he did. His family had selected this house with its dingy outlook. He did n't like it. Why had n't they rented a place farther up on Jackson Street, one of the clean, newer residences he had passed in coming from the drug-store?

He wished just then that he and Paul were sitting on a bench in Jackson Park, watching the bathers, and the breakers a windy day like this always brought out. Or that they were walking down Woodlawn, "Brains' Row," toward the Midway. Or that they were just sitting talking on the veranda of the boarding-house.

CHAPTER II

AT dinner Hewitt saw less use in being sorry for himself and regained his normal youthful attitude of acceptance. His father, more restless and with the lines about his mouth and eyes grown deeper after five years, aided in this process of acclimatization as did also the hot dinner cooked with the culinary skill handed down from mother to daughter on the farms of the Middle West.

Charles Stevenson examined his son with eyes which four years of retirement from active farming had intensified, curiously enough. If he had expected to see a too precise fop issue from the supposed sophistication of four years in a city he was disappointed. Hewitt still had the naturalness of his childhood, was still wholesome. He had developed, it is true, a refinement of speech from which he often dropped back, in the presence of this new-found portion of his family, into Hoosierisms. He pronounced the "i" in "it" with an un-Hoosierly precision which his father noticed and resented, and his "a" was less flat than a native's. But his carelessness of clothing, the exceptions being his cleanness of shirt and collar and his shininess of shoes, made up for these assumed

differences in speech, his father thought. He was not so well-dressed as Paul had been on his infrequent visits home.

Hewitt, also, did not exaggerate his care in table-manners, as his father half-expected. Mr. Stevenson had been prepared to emphasize his own indifference to a city code of etiquette by leaving his spoon in his cup while he drank, although in previous years this had brought a storm of protest from Grace. He had no intention of being cowed by the superiorities of a son who had recently been graduated from a Chicago high school, and so endowed with the prestige such a course gave.

The grandfather regarded his descendant with curiosity, now that he was entirely awake and warmed by dinner.

"That Sears Roebuck is a fine store in Chicago, ain't it?" he queried.

"Ever buy anything there?" Hewitt asked, with great good humor.

"No, not yet. We're going to, though. There's a good lawn-mower in the catalogue. Your father says maybe he'll get one in the spring. I could cut the grass."

"How's Paul?" Charles Stevenson inquired.

"He's fine. He's going to marry a nice girl this fall."

There was silence while Grace cut some meat into fine bits for her grandfather. Then Charles Stevenson abruptly introduced the subject of the garden farm.

"I've got a little garden patch five miles out," he said. "We'll go out to-morrow and look it over. Nothing much left now, but it's good ground. I'm fertilizing and rotating crops."

"That's the idea," Hewitt managed to say with some enthusiasm. He had a faint suspicion that his father's sending for him to come home had something to do with this garden plot. He resented the suspicion. That the Stevensons had been tillers of the soil for three generations was not to influence a fourth to attach his aims and hopes to the soil. Cities had set their fingers upon Hewitt, and he had no desire to unfasten their gentle hold.

When apple pie, luscious and juicy, had been eaten, Charles Stevenson arose, patting his enlarged abdominal regions according to habit and wiping the ends of his short mustache vigorously with his folded napkin. He was very leisurely, and grunted out an unconvincing cough or two while advancing to the doorway. There he turned ponderously and looked at his son with blue eyes that began to twinkle mildly. A breeze, wandering through the doorway, stirred the thin, reddish gray hair that stood up in a curly fluffiness from his partly bald crown, giving him a half-childish air of abandon which was incongruous with his breadth of shoulder and the muscularity of his physique. He did not speak, as Hewitt expected, but coughed again and went out upon the front veranda.

Grace nodded in that direction; Hewitt understood and followed his father.

Mr. Stevenson was sitting in a big, caned chair, his feet crossed and elevated to the narrow iron railing. He was silent while his son drew up another chair and sat down.

"I suppose you are anxious to know why I sent for you, aren't you?" He seemed to take pleasure in having mystified the boy. His eyes twinkled again into a blurred smile. "I want you to go up to Purdue for a couple of years and take an agricultural course. Then you can come back here and I'll buy up the farm next to that garden of mine and we'll start farming again. Well?"

He regarded his son narrowly, the twinkle dying almost imperceptibly in his eyes and giving place to a marked concern for the answer to this generous proposition. Hewitt understood immediately how much his accepting this plan meant to his father. The blow had fallen. He was now confronted with the confirmation of his half-formed suspicions. But he did not speak.

"Well, what do you say?" The man was irritably impatient.

Hewitt had never in his life talked out any matter with anyone except Paul. Somehow, Paul was different. You didn't mind saying things to him; you were, moreover, always understood. You counted on that. Other people seldom understood; they made you want to dry up and thrash it out with yourself. At present he was so sure that his father would certainly not understand that he closed up his recently opened

shell and set his jaw. The Stevensons had an inherent tendency to set their jaws. They were always — except Paul — either in the act of setting their jaws or of releasing them from a set position.

His father's impatience waxed. He saw, no doubt, that Hewitt might refuse even to discuss the matter with him. His jaw, too, set.

"Well?" he queried again, with added impatience.

Then something in the lines around his father's mouth and eyes touched Hewitt, and he stopped being a Stevenson.

"I tell you, Father, I'm going to college,— but I want to take an academic course. I don't know what profession I want to take up eventually. I'm not sure about anything, except that I first want a broad foundation. I can't go to Purdue. Purdue's a good school of its kind, but I don't want an agricultural or an engineering course."

The impatience that had found only mild expression and demanded more, burst.

"You might as well understand right now that I'll pay for an agricultural course, and not for any other one. You can take that and come back here, and we'll run that farm. Or you can shift for yourself. If you think for one minute that I'm goin' to spend my hard-earned money sendin' you to some college to make a street-car conductor or a professor or a snob out o' you, you're mistaken. I've made my offer, and it'll stand. You can go to Purdue for two years, and I'll pay all the expenses. I can afford

to, if we're going on a farm afterward. You better think it over."

The rage subsided. He gazed into space, while his son for the second time that day examined the rear of the shops on the next street and wished himself back in Chicago more heartily than ever. His father's next words broke in on this current of desire.

"Look here, Hewie," he said, and his voice and mood were perceptibly softened, "I'm not rich. I've got money in the bank — a few thousands. We can live on the interest all right, getting what we do from the garden out there. Grace and I and your grandfather get along all right without skimping much. I could n't afford to send you to college — an ordinary college — for four years without cutting into the principal. Anyway, you don't need a college education. You're educated right now all you need be. You've got what most men would consider a good education. What we need in this country, instead of any more two-by-four college graduates to fill up the cities tryin' to live better than their fathers did on less money — what we need is some good solid farmers with a knowledge of soils and parasites and pigs and dairyin'. What this country needs is some good young farmers."

He subsided into his chair, ready for further length of discourse.

"Now when I was young, we did n't have to be so careful of soil and planting and so forth. There was plenty of land to be had cheap. Why, Hewie, since

your grandfather's time, land values have doubled in this state. Your great-grandfather was one of the pioneers in Indiana. He cleared some of the land right around where we used to live. Then he moved on into Illinois. Everybody in those days moved on. But your grandfather came back to Indiana and bought up some of the same land his father had cleared. Land was n't high even then, and the soil was so good that no one had to be careful. If you wore out one field, there was another one to move to. It's only in the last few years that us younger farmers have had to begin thinkin' about the land. And to tell the truth, I was n't thinkin' much about it when I owned that land over east of here. I was n't thinkin' much about increasing the number of bushels to the acre. But I've been finding out some things since I've had more time to read. In fact, for a couple of years I did n't have much else to do *but* read, and I've found out a lot of things from these new farm journals. It used to be farmin' and takin', but now it's farmin' and puttin'. For everything you take out of the soil, you've got to put something in. In fifty years, if it's handled right, that garden and the farm next to it will be as good as it was twenty years ago."

Hewitt was more interested than he had intended or wanted to be. His father had developed mentally during these few years. But no amount of eloquence could have changed the boy's feeling about the agricultural course.

The September twilight deepened into darkness which was soon pierced by the gleams of a street-light on the corner in front of the house. The air became clearer and cooler. Father and son silently watched the automobiles which passed. Now and then a street-car clanged its way along Meridian. Some boys gathered on the tennis-courts across the street to play "knock the wicket."

"What do you say, Hewitt?" questioned the man after a while, with a complete absence of rancor.

Hewitt hesitated.

"I can't do it, Father. I already have my plans, and it wouldn't be fair to myself to take your way. Paul was going to help me. Now I'll do it myself."

The older man looked at him.

"Then you're going back to Chicago?"

Hewitt suspected the same import of suppressed appeal that had been present in Grace's similar question of the afternoon. He disliked hurting his father, but he wanted to go back to Chicago.

Five years before, Paul had come down to his mother's funeral and had found his young brother just finished with the country school and the possessor of a keen, unsatisfied demand for more education. They had all been glad enough to accept Paul's suggestion that Hewitt go back to Chicago with him and finish high school. His father had wanted Hewitt to have that chance. The desire for education was a part of his Anglo-Saxon traditions. But gradually, as the boy had written short letters telling that he was

working on Saturdays in a grocery, later in a drug-store, and still later, during the last two years of high school, in a book-store not far from the University of Chicago, their father had let Paul and Hewitt pay all the expenses of this education, with the load lightened only by an annual Christmas check of twenty dollars or so.

Hewitt had had his country-school training supplemented by a year in a Chicago grammar school, and had also spent four years in high school. But by far the most important part of his education had been gained during his association with Paul, with university students who lived near them, and with others who made Woody's book-store a rendezvous and general headquarters for the discussion of anything from sex matters to the possible population of Mars or the weaknesses in theoretical socialism.

Between school terms and in the summer Hewitt had spent his time reading the books which these men talked about. He did not at first understand all that he read, but his mentality grew by leaps and bounds. Psychology first, and later sociology, interspersed with some elementary economics and bits of necessary biology, had consumed his attention for a year. Before that, all his reading had been literature — the modern novelists and poets desultorily, Arnold, Pater, and Coleridge by fits and starts, Sudermann, Hauptman, Maeterlinck, Rostand, Gorky and Andreyev in translations, and the American realists intermittently.

Hewitt was the kind of boy that people take delight

in attempting to influence — the most different types of people. Mr. Woody had tried to imprint upon him his own devotion to the classics, with temporary success. A woman suffragist of the aggressive, smiling, sure-of-herself class had pursued him wildly for an entire week, trying to persuade him that women must have the vote; and Hewitt, already sure that they should have it, but unwilling to admit as much to the aggressive one, only succeeded in getting rid of her as a companion by remarking with a contemptuous smile that he himself did not yet have the vote and so was little concerned with woman's possession of it.

One young iconoclast distinctly not of the parlor variety, a German Jew even thinner than Hewitt, had been most potent in directing the course of his thought. He was a youth who had come to Chicago from Germany at the age of seven, unable to speak any but the simplest English. With the keenness of the intellectual of his race, he had absorbed the conventional training of the Chicago schools and proceeded to become a radical critic of all existing institutions. His pet piece of iconoclasm was the failure of democracy. During many evenings, rainy or snowy ones especially, when business in the book-store was negligible, old Mr. Woody and Hewitt and Letsky and others leaned upon the glass show-cases and talked far into the night on sex and religion and government and international law and Greek art and any other subject that popped into prominence for the nonce.

Letsky, first of all, knew modern science. He kept up to the second on progress in research. Then his favorite method was to forge ahead from the point up to which science stood sponsor and with a brilliant imagination tear down present systems to establish new ones. Nothing was sacred to his prying mind. He was intent upon rapid social progress. He saw ways. Into the maelstrom in which he plunged Hewitt he threw one straw -- Question everything!

"Destructive thinking precedes every worthwhile piece of construction," he used to say. "Question everything. The man who wrote in a weekly recently that the harsh critic is acting according to the theory that 'the hand that rocks the boat rules the land,' did n't carry his cleverness far enough. Rocking the boat may prove that the craft is unseaworthy; and then it can be *made* seaworthy."

A favorite butt of Letsky's wit was marriage. That institution, the target of a great deal of cheaper wit than the young Jew's, the chronic source of vaudeville jokes, and presenting more apparent weaknesses than any other institution, because more people live in close relations with it and so are aware of its defects, served for the skeleton upon which he draped his best mourning.

"Marriage among primitive people was beautiful, compared to our modern system," he would declare.

"What have you to offer in place of the modern?" Mr. Woody always asked.

"Nothing yet. I'm going to have something to

offer in a few years, though," he returned laughing on one occasion.

And both of his auditors, strange to say, were firm in their belief that in five years or so he *would* have a solution to the perplexities of this particular problem.

"Question everything" had been his last words to Hewitt on the night before he left Chicago. "And don't get married until I've worked out this new system," he had come back to the store-door to warn him.

"Then you'll go back to Chicago?"

His father's question had brought racing into Hewitt's mind those talks with Letsky, the peacefulness of being in the midst of intellectual movement, and the satisfaction of feeling yourself learning from others. But dominating all his desires was that last talk he had had with Paul.

"Even if father wants you to carry out some plans of his, instead of your own, you'd better stay in Alston," the latter had said. "You can't enter the university this fall, if I get married. You can't cover all your expenses with the money you can make yourself. You need some to start on. Maybe father'll help, if he sees you're insistent enough. Stay in Alston and work and save your money. Father may help in the end."

Now that he was in Alston and confronted by his father's determination to have him turn scientific farmer, he wanted to disregard Paul's advice and take the first train back. But caution spoke.

"Look here, Father," he said, shifting nervously in his chair, "I want to go to Chicago University. I can earn my own board and room there, if you'll pay for my tuition and my clothes. Next year, maybe, I could manage all of it. I don't want to be a farmer. I have — other plans."

"What plans?"

"I haven't decided definitely. I think I — I want to write." He was ashamed of the confession.

"Write what?"

"I can't tell yet. Poetry — or —"

"Poetry?"

"Books of some kind."

"There's no money in poetry."

Hewitt was angered.

"Do you think money's the only thing in the world?"

"You'll find money is a blamed sight more important than some other things you think are so important now. When you're sixty you'll know it's money that keeps you out of the poor-farm. Money —"

"I know. Of course one needs money. I need some right now." A smile flickered into his eyes at the anomaly of his position. Deriding money, when he had been begging for some of that same filthy silverware!

"Well, you'll not get it from me, unless you go to Purdue and learn something practical. Poetry! You'll learn to earn your own living in my way, or you'll earn it the best way you can. D'you understand?"

Hewitt considered losing his temper and thundering a little understanding in his own behalf. He wanted, or almost wanted, to tell his father that he did n't give a damn whether he helped him or not, and to bring his fist down on his chair-arm, as his father had done, with an ultimatum of "Help me, or I'll never darken your door again!" But he had rather lost the habit of getting angry. Paul had taught him by example a passivity in the face of others' anger. "What's the use?" that amiable person always had said.

"All right, Father," was what Hewitt actually said. "I guess I understand. Guess I'll read a little and go to bed."

Mr. Stevenson allowed his son to rise, stretch himself, and go into the house, before he rose quickly and exclaimed hoarsely:

"Are you going back to Chicago?"

Hewitt allowed himself to be deliberate. He knew that his father wanted him to stay, and he had a feeling of power in delaying his answer. Also, he did not wish to commit himself. So he equivocated.

"I can't tell. I'll decide to-morrow," he replied.

Hewitt figured that if he could make even fifteen dollars a week, at the end of a year he would have seven hundred and twenty dollars. "If I could save ten a week," he thought, "I'd have five hundred and twenty. Not so bad. I guess I'll stay." But he did not repeat this decision aloud. Instead, he yawned as he reached the top of the stairs and switched on the light in the hall.

CHAPTER III

HEWITT'S care the next morning as to his linen, correctness of tie, and smoothness of hair — the last only conquered into submissiveness by brushing and the application of a very little hair-oil — would have laid him open to the loud scorn of Letsky and his radical associates. Five hundred and twenty dollars is not to be sniffed at, however. In Chicago he would have to pay for his board and room; here at home he could save. And one must yield to popular demand in regard to neatness of attire. Five years before, Hewitt's head had been teeming with the boyish "classics" which the farmers' sons around him read and lent to each other. Not dime novels, to be sure, for these had become passé, but stories in which two bright youths apply for the same position of office boy, or some equally delectable berth. The one who is pressed, manicured, and washed, is always successful over his untidy rival. Not that these tales in nineteen twelve ordinarily played a large part in Hewitt's thought. But a possible five hundred and twenty dollars in savings depended on his getting a position in Alston, and savings meant college, and college meant — what might it not mean? Ultimate victory!

Letsky had been the center of a group who scorned correct, or even spotless, clothing. To them it was

the index of the materialistic, and hence the non-intellectual type of mind. Some men went to the university with the idea of getting a degree in order that they might pursue professions or business, and so might acquire money to sustain or raise the standard of living set by their more or less prosperous fathers. These were worthy only of contempt. They lived in fraternity houses, or if not fortunate enough as to athletic prowess or family resources to be affiliated with such an organization, aped their luckier brethren. Their object was to get through college with as little work and as much enjoyment as possible. They scorned the workers, the "grinds."

So said Letsky and his kind, although Hewitt had upon one or two occasions remonstrated with them and tried to make them understand that there were exceptions to this brand of fraternity men—his friend Kenneth Reed, for instance, originally a friend of Paul's, but since become David to Hewitt's Jonathan during a winter when shortness of funds kept him close to the campus. The young man had even taken Hewitt to his fraternity house for dinner, where the boy had been delighted with the gay air of careless comradeship that prevailed there.

Letsky and his friends were obdurate to this line of argument. Their creed was as follows: To distinguish ourselves from the class of materialistic, ignorant members of the American proletariat who deceive themselves by thinking they are an aristocracy, we disdain clothing as decoration. Clothes are all

right in their place; society decrees that man cover his nakedness. Not obeying this requirement would possibly inconvenience us and, indeed, make it impossible for us to take part in those gatherings of society which please us. But in clothing ourselves we demand the right to wear any kind of garment which our fancy dictates.

All of which sounds extremely radical. In practice, these young intellectuals confined their "fancy" to old clothing a year or two behind the fashions. They refused to dress up, and a new collar meant that some relative had confiscated and destroyed their last frayed piece of neckwear.

"You spend too much money on clothes," Letsky had recently told Hewitt, pointing the finger of scorn at his year-old suit which had been cleaned and pressed. Hewitt had immediately become ashamed of his bill for pressing. "The true intellectual has no concern with clothes," continued the other. "A natural state of nakedness would clarify many of the world's ideals. Your own Carlyle says as much."

In English literature Letsky permitted himself to admire only two men — the illustrious Scotch Thomas, just quoted, and the Irish Bernard Shaw. Even they, of course, had their glaring weaknesses for him.

Nevertheless, Hewitt, hating dirtiness with the hatred of Grace's brother, paid strict attention to his clothing on this morning. He was even cleaner than usual, if that were possible.

He later explained to his father that his presence

in the garden five miles out could be postponed, in view of his determination to get a position that would pay enough to make college the following year a possibility.

"What's the chance in the factories here?" he asked him after breakfast.

"I don't know much about the factories. There's plenty of them here, though. The chamber of commerce has brought three or four new ones here lately. The biggest one is out east from here. It manufactures lighting and starting, and ignition systems. The two men who began it about fifteen years ago sold out last year to a company. An Indianapolis banker owns most of the stock, I guess. It's a good concern. It built a country club this summer out east of town for its employees. They say that those two men the factory's named after—name's Preston—experimented in a shed back of their house when they were boys trying to get their invention perfected. The older one is the mechanical genius; the other runs the business end. It's the biggest factory here. It employs over a thousand men, I 'spect. You might go there. I guess there are about ten other good-sized factories here, too, and lots of little ones."

"I believe I'll go out to Preston's. The bigger the place, the more chance of getting in."

Mr. Stevenson watched his son reach for his hat on the line of hooks attached to the hall-wall. At last he spoke again in an off-hand way, as though he had just thought of the matter.

"Look here, Hewie. I said I wouldn't help you through college, but if you 'll stay here in Alston and work and save your money, you understand that you don't have to pay any board."

"All right." This was Hewitt's way of thanking him. He had expected the proposition, but he had not expected his father to speak of it so soon.

The youth was, on this bright September morning, the victim of no such strong desire to be in Chicago as he had been the night before. Sleep had eliminated the nervous excitability that had given rise to that painful discontent. Alston looked almost pleasant in the morning light.

"Hello, Buster!" he said to a small boy plodding along the street with an air of extreme weariness. "School begun?"

"Begins Monday." There was no belief in education in the voice.

"Tough luck!" laughed Hewitt.

The factory was located a mile or more from the center of the city, much of the territory between it and the business district being built up with small, old-fashioned houses and cottages. The size of Alston, as approximated during his walk, surprised Hewitt. "It's not so small," he was driven to admit. Just before the groups of houses scattered into vacant lots and garden tracts that indicated the margin of the open country, he turned, as directed by the flagman at the railway crossing, and passing a factory where automobile and bicycle tires were made, emerged

upon a wide, well-paved street showing a park on one side and a stretch of neat, fresh cottages on the other. He made his way for several blocks down this thoroughfare before he approached a brick-and-stone office. In front of it a well-kept lawn blossomed with geometric beds of geraniums and petunias, and beyond it stretched to the west and south an expanse of many-windowed factory buildings.

Hewitt's sense of exhilaration, born of his brisk walk and the clear coolness of the autumn morning, waned slightly before the necessity of entering the structure before him to ask for work. It really did n't matter whether he got the position he was after or not, he knew. There were other factories. He could always go back to Chicago. He compelled himself to assume a cheerfulness he did not feel while climbing the steps and entering the clean, cool, outer office, where a stenographer and clerk were working.

The young man stated his errand. The stenographer looked up with a curious glance, and then resumed her work; but she could not resist a second look. If she could have read the depth of Hewitt's indifference to all feminine youth!

"Mr. Cooke will see you in a moment," he was told. "Sit down."

Mr. Cooke took his time about seeing him. Not that the youth minded, though his discomfiture increased. But he examined the offices at the rear, and through a series of open doors he could see into a factory-room beyond. Here twenty or more men

were closing packing-cases and rolling trucks toward an unseen entrance.

The result of his interview with Mr. Cooke was not favorable. Business was a little slack, and Preston's were not taking on any new men at the moment.

"You say you're a graduate of a Chicago high school? What business experience have you had?"

Hewitt told him about the grocery and the drug-store and Woody's book-store.

"I see," said the acting-manager. "You fill out this blank, and we'll file it. By the way, if you have been working in a book-store, you might have some chance to get in Smith's here. That's the best one in town. We'll keep your application on file."

Hewitt walked out into the open air with a leaden heart. He liked what he had seen of that factory, and deprived of the opportunity of working there, it became more tempting than ever. It was so clean and orderly, the new kind of factory you read about, probably with lounging-rooms and rest-rooms, and even pool- and billiard-rooms. And that country club his father had spoken of. That showed what kind of people these were. Also, the story his father suggested of the success of the two men who had begun the business held an element of romance. The immensity of the concern filled Hewitt with a new admiration for Alston. He remembered, confronted with the giant letters PRESTON on top of the factory, that he had seen a full-page advertisement of this company in one of the largest weeklies. It was

an impressively simple advertisement, with the information: "Factories — Alston, Indiana. Offices,— Detroit, Chicago, New York, and London." He had only noticed this advertisement because of the unexpected information about Alston. Hewitt turned to look at the buildings again, and caught a glimpse of the little stenographer watching him. He hurried on with no second thought of her.

CHAPTER IV

HEWITT jumped into a street-car when he had crossed the railroad on his return to town. It jerked along spasmodically over uneven rails. He lighted a cigarette in an attempt to regain some of his spirits.

"I can always go back to Chicago," he told himself, "and that 's where I want to go anyway."

The street-car clanged its way down Meridian Street, where little pools lay in the ruts in the pavement, giving proof that a sprinkler had passed recently. Traffic was lighter than it had been on the previous afternoon. A few automobile trucks and some wagons clattered along, but pedestrians were few.

Hewitt wandered into the drug-store on the corner again, because he wanted information about Smith's book-store and because he wanted something to drink. A negro was clattering tables and chairs into rooms to facilitate his cleaning of the tile floor. Two clerks were dusting show-cases. One of them was exchanging jests with a pale boy who, decked in a white coat and cap, was scrubbing energetically at the marble-topped fountain.

"Where 's Smith's?" asked Hewitt.

"Three doors north," the girl at the cigar-counter told him.

"Thank you." Then he turned to the boy at the fountain. "Give me a 'coke,'" he said.

He drank the dark brown, iced liquid in three gulps. It was a stimulant, and he needed stimulation. Hewitt hated the new. It unnerved him. A doubt of his ever getting a position assailed him and crumpled his backbone annoyingly.

He sauntered three doors north, and bolted quickly into the entrance of Smith's book-store with a preliminary feeling of failure. It was not a wide room. Some shining, highly-polished office-desks on which stood brass, green-shaded desk-lights made a row through the center of it. Two clerks, a young man and a fluffy-haired girl who watched him as he proceeded toward a desk behind the sporting goods counter at the rear, were arranging magazines they were taking from a box.

"Something?" the girl asked in a professional tone.

"I want to see — Is Mr. Smith here?"

"Yes. He's back there at the desk."

She returned to her work and said something to the boy that Hewitt could not catch. The latter continued to watch the newcomer as he walked toward the desk at which Mr. Smith was writing, unaware of footsteps approaching him.

Hewitt became irritated at the flush he could feel creeping up into his cheeks and his hair as he found himself involuntarily softening the sound of his footsteps. He had an uncomfortable sensation of being

about to break into ingratiating *Uriah Heep* movements with his hands. He threw off the desire with a jerk, and stood quietly, hat in hand, with his head thrown back in painful consciousness of the boy and girl, until the man looked up inquiringly at him. Evidently he was not so unaware of those footsteps as he had seemed, but he immediately resumed operations on the check-book under his hand.

"Well?"

The silence was broken at the end of an interval during which Hewitt found himself growing hotter and hotter.

"Could I talk to you?" asked Hewitt with some difficulty.

He had been sure that he was going to stutter, but he conquered that weakness and spoke with deceiving ease.

"Sure. Talk ahead." Mr. Smith, very broad of shoulder and immense of abdomen, his high brown derby pushed a little back on his bald head, swung back in his swivel-chair and looked at Hewitt with a quizzical smile. "Talk ahead. I'm listening. Pretty warm, is n't it?"

Hewitt had no desire to "talk ahead" in the presence of those two annoying young persons who were still busy over the magazines not far away, and yet he could not very well ask Mr. Smith to see him in a private room, since only one door was visible and that opened into the alley back of the gray-stone post-office. He tried to speak low, but the man's

unnecessarily loud and distinct answers could be heard anywhere within two hundred yards.

"I'm trying to find a place — to find work," Hewitt began. He could feel the eyes of the fluffy-haired girl upon him. "I've worked for over two years in Woody's book-store near the University of Chicago. I want to stay in Alston this year, if I can find a place. I was wondering if — you — needed anyone." The finish was lamer than the beginning.

Mr. Smith shifted the brown derby forward and examined Hewitt from head to toe with the appearance of appraising him. Then he made out another check, put it in an envelope, and addressed it.

"We need some one," he took the boy's breath away by saying. "School begins Monday, and there'll be a rush for a few days. We can take you on temporarily at seven a week, but the work may only last a week — unless we all take a fancy to you," he added whimsically.

Hewitt caught his breath and nearly dropped his cap at the same time.

"Seven a week?" he said. "Why, I could make six a week working after school and on Saturdays at Woody's in Chicago."

"Well, this is not Chicago, Son, you know."

"But I'm a high school graduate and know books."

"Where'd you graduate from high school?"

"Chicago."

"How long did you say you worked at Woody's?"

"Two years and a little over."

"Well, this is n't Chicago, Son," he repeated.

"What's your name?"

"Hewitt Stevenson."

"And you're a graduate of a high school and worked for two years in a book-store?"

"Yes, sir."

Suddenly Mr. Smith seemed to have an inspiration.

"Typewrite?" he asked.

"Yes. Took it at school."

"All right, Son. Sit down there at that typewriter and let's see you copy this letter of mine." He whirled in his chair and drew out two pages of closely-written manuscript from a pigeon-hole, handing them to Hewitt.

The young man, with no idea whether or not this was in the nature of a test, threw back the cover of the machine and set to work trying to read the letter. There were difficulties. Words thoroughly familiar to the boy, when written in their usual form and spelled according to recognized authorities, eluded his grasp for entire minutes. He pondered over certain expressions until he became afraid that Mr. Smith, noting the absence of noise indicating progress on the work, might turn around and seize the letter from his unresisting hands in a fit of temper, although he did not appear to be a tempestuous sort of person. He typed the heading at length, and attempted the first paragraph. If the words had been the short words

of ordinary letter-writing or of speech, he could have made a guess at the contents, being a good guesser, but they were long words, very long words.

After ten minutes Hewitt gave up in despair and approached the manager hesitatingly.

"Mr. Smith, I'm sorry to bother you, but I can't make out this word."

Mr. Smith put on the tortoise-rimmed spectacles which dangled from a cord around his plump neck and peered searchingly at the word indicated by Hewitt's pointing finger.

"Don't write very plain, do I?" he hemmed. "Let's see. That word — is — Oh, yes, that's 'assignment.' I'm a poor writer, Son. Always was. Go ahead. You're slow."

"I — I stopped over that word. I hated to bother you."

"All right. No bother. Go ahead," and he picked up the morning paper and began to turn the pages noisily.

A young man, dressed in the tight English style just coming into vogue, hatless and sunburned, dashed in at the door and back to the desk.

"Say, Dad, the golf tournament's on and mother and Ernestine and I'll stay out at the club for lunch. So you go to the restaurant. How're things?"

"'Things' are all right, Blake. Go ahead and enjoy yourself while you're young, and don't begin to worry about the business."

They both laughed at this mild sarcasm.

"Fine day for the last matches. You ought to come out, Dad."

"No. No, thanks. Busy. Run along," and Mr. Smith turned to adjust his glasses and continued his reading. "How's that letter coming?" he asked presently.

"All right, I guess," said Hewitt. "There's a word here I can't make out, though. There's a little blot over it."

"Yes? Let's see. Oh, yes. That's —" he puckered his lips into a whistle. "Be darned if I know. Lord, how I write. Never could read my own, once it was cold. That's — '*Harper's Magazine*.' Sure!"

"Thanks."

Hewitt smiled to himself as he finished the sentence. He clicked on to the end, stopping intermittently to ponder over the elusive meanings, but at last it was done, ready for the signature.

"Fine!" admired the author of the original. "Looks fine. I can't type a decent letter to save my life. I worked over that touch method they sent me a book about when I bought the machine, but I could n't learn it. Blake — my son who was just in here — could do this typewriting for me if he would, but he's too busy playing golf and making love to the girls. Good boy but he likes to enjoy himself. Natural enough. I did, too, when I was his age. Now let's see. I'm to sign here. All right, Son, you can come here and work for a week, and if you do

well enough and take an interest in the business, we 'll see what we can do for you."

"Start at seven a week?" asked Hewitt, hesitatingly.

"No. You can type my letters, so I 'll give you ten."

"All right. Start to-day?"

"You just stay. I 'll show you around."

Hewitt hesitated again.

"If I start at ten and prove satisfactory, there is n't any reason why I should n't expect to get fifteen before long, is there?"

"Fifteen?" Mr. Smith puckered his forehead and pursed his lips into an expression of doubt. "Well, we 'll say ten and see what happens."

Hewitt was not entirely satisfied, but he liked Mr. Smith. There was a wholesome healthiness about him. He did n't have Mr. Woody's refinement nor his classical tastes, certainly, but he was good-natured, and that appealed to Hewitt. Therefore he stayed.

Hewitt sat gazing toward the front of the store, where a woman was buying stationery from the boy who had been unpacking magazines. Now that he had the position he had been seeking, a surge of superiority crept over Hewitt. He knew more about books than any one in Alston, he would have wagered. Out of ten a week he could save at least seven, but he would see to it that the ten became fifteen soon.

The purchasing public who wandered in now and again had the air of wanting something, though they

were not sure what. Probably it was a "good" monthly with lots of enormously interesting stories about the romance of the slums, or about feminine clerks in department-stores who were determined not to "go wrong," or about the wealthy leisure-class who had little to do except to get into mystery stories. This, at least, was Hewitt's interpretation of their wants. He made it while he was observing them and Mr. Smith and the store and the two clerks who were busying themselves in the front of the store, now that they were sure Mr. Smith had decided to hire the new clerk. He determined to like Mr. Smith. He imagined, too, that he might like Blake Smith, should he ever be thrown into close contact with him. But any hopes he had of knowing Blake well rapidly evaporated when a young newspaper-reporter, a high-school boy, came in and saluted the manager and owner with, "Good morning, Mr. Smith. Any news for the *Times*?"

Mr. Smith looked at the young chap deliberately and quite unintentionally knocked his glasses down the front of a soiled vest, the two top buttons of which were open, revealing a crinkled white shirt on which some cigar ashes were reposing.

"News? There's plenty of news. Lots of it. I'm hiring a new clerk, for one thing."

The boy grinned.

"What d' you think the *Times* is, a country newspaper?"

"Well, we're only thirty thousand, Eddie."

"Thirty-five," contradicted the youth.

"May be. But here's another item. Blake's going back to Wisconsin to school next week." He shook with a great chuckle.

"Good heavens!" cried the reporter, "we've been running that item for a week now!" He threw up his hands and dodged out at a mock run. "I guess I'll go where there's some real news!"

"Becker's cigar-store, I'll bet!"—and Mr. Smith's prophecy proved true enough, as Hewitt could see. "Those young kids can't resist that pool-room, even when they know they ought to be working. Eddie's father's out West trying to get another start—he went under here—and Eddie's supposed to be putting himself through high school. But he's going to lose his job, because he spends so much of his time over there." Mr. Smith chewed his cigar ruminatingly. "These kids! But say, Hewitt, I'll introduce you to these clerks in a minute. You might as well help around here a little. I want to explain some things to you, too. By the way, what does your father do?"

"Retired farmer."

"Won't invest his money, will he?" This was in the nature of a statement, rather than a question.

Hewitt shook his head.

"I don't know," he said, and felt sure that his father would n't, also ashamed that this was so, in view of Mr. Smith's evident disapproval. "I have n't been home since he sold his land east of here."

"Well, he won't. We tried to get him interested in the citizens' heating company we were forming last year to supply heat to the downtown property holders, and he would n't budge from his first position. Wanted his money safe in a bank. Now, about this business. What do you want to work in a book-store for? Why does n't your father make a farmer out of you?"

Hewitt explained half-impatiently.

"M'm," was Mr. Smith's contribution to the subject. "Bound to go to college?"

"I want to go."

"All right. Now, about this business. The Smiths have run a book-store in Alston ever since there was an Alston. In fact, even before there was an Alston I 'spect my ancestors had an idea that when there *was* one, the Smiths would have a store there. I've watched this town grow from a few thousands to thirty-five thousand. There are a few of us here who came to Alston long before there was a natural gas boom in these parts. Why, I remember when all that section cater-cornered from the post-office was woods, with a cemetery about where that big place of Waite's is on Chase and Eleventh Streets. Alston was n't very big in those days, and my father's furniture business was more important than the book-and-stationery part. Since then, of course, we've sold out the furniture, except the office supplies. Now what I'm trying to explain to you, Hewitt, is that this business of ours means a lot more than dollars

and cents. If my family tried to live on the money from this bookstore, they might have to cut down on their living expenses more than they do. We make money, but not enough to support my family the way they choose to live. I don't spend so much, but they like it, and I have the money to let them do as they like. But if a person leaves this store dissatisfied, either with the service he gets or with the merchandise he buys, I want to make it right with him. Pleasing people costs money sometimes. I know it. I do it. I want satisfied customers. See?"

The man chewed again at the cigar he held in his hand and gazed at Hewitt, who was leaning against a low counter.

"Sit down, Son."

Hewitt sat down.

"What do you know about books?" was next flung at him.

He hesitated and looked his question.

"Novels, for instance?" he inquired.

Mr. Smith nodded.

"Not so much," he lied. He really thought he knew a great deal about them. "Rather a poor lot as a whole, the American novels," he said; then added, "Are n't they?"

"H'm," said Mr. Smith noncommittally.

"Dreiser has an artist's message, I believe. He's the only realist who can approach Howells."

"Dreiser?" growled Mr. Smith. "I never heard of him."

"Indiana man. Used to live up here at Warsaw."

"Who else is good?"

"Well, I suppose Wharton, Churchill, Harrison, Norris, and a few others have tried to do something a little better than popular drivel. But our men as a whole can't approach the English."

"Why?"

"There's not enough intelligent reading in this country to encourage the novelist to try to do better than light sentimentality. A man in this country is either popular and light, or poverty-stricken and 'high-brow.' In England the reading public demands better literature and gets it."

"H'm. How do you know so much about it?"

"I—I read. Then, you see," he went on apologetically, "being near a university you hear these things discussed and like to know a little about them yourself."

"All right, Hewitt. By the way, Mrs. Tom Stewart wants some one sent up to take an order for books and magazines. What do you say to going up yourself? You might like to talk to her. She used to teach in Chicago before she married Tom. Fine woman. But don't get too 'high-brow' even with her, Son. People, the general run of people, even bright ones, don't read much outside of magazines and books on subjects they're particularly interested in. The most popular books in our store last year were one on woman's suffrage and another on 'bridge.' The women in Alston like those things.

You run up to the Stewarts now. I'll telephone Mrs. Stewart and tell her I'm sending you."

"Where does she live?"

"Up on Eighth Street, in the 'four hundred' block. Big house set back in shrubbery. Green house."

Hewitt braced up. He felt excited, relieved, now that a little responsibility had been thrust on him. He wanted to talk to this woman who had once lived in Chicago, still the city of beauty, its glories bright on the distant horizon. Blessed city of romance — the romance of the far-away!

The young man made his way through the morning shoppers down Meridian Street to Eighth, which stretched east and west, passing on the north side of the court-house. Its length to the west was attractive with large residences, some of them almost palatial, surrounded by well-kept lawns and masses of shrubbery. An electric coupé glided out from the driveway of a stone house as Hewitt passed. A sweet-faced old lady dressed in lavender smiled as she drove in front of him.

The Stewart house was impressive, even to Hewitt's Chicago-minded attitude. He climbed the stone steps with a new sense of the importance of Alston as a center of wealth. A wide veranda, covered with a thick screen of vines, stretched around the corner of the house and ended in a porte-cochère under which stood a powerful gasoline automobile. A white-capped maid admitted him to a small library at the

end of which a fire-place gleamed with a small wood-fire. Hewitt thought, as he glanced into the living-room on the other side of the hall, that he had never seen such a beautifully furnished house. The furniture was of the kind he had been accustomed to see in the windows of Marshall Field's on the few occasions when he found himself downtown in Chicago. A quaint Hoosier autumn scene of beech woods hung above the fire-place and held his attention for some time. He liked it. He knew little about pictures, but this one pleased him so much that he wondered who the artist was. In sitting down he had fumbled his cap on his knees, but he insistently held it still when he became aware of these nervous movements.

"Hewitt Stevenson, from Smith's book-store," he had told the maid with dignity.

A little girl appeared from behind a large wing-chair in which she had been sunk with a book, and yawned before she seemed aware of the boy. She examined him with large, serious, brown eyes and walked out, but paused in the hall to call back in rippling soft tones: "Mother knows you are here, does n't she?"

Hewitt wanted to smile at her, but did not; her seriousness seemed to deter him.

"Thank you. She knows," he said.

"You are to dress before lunch," Mrs. Stewart's voice was heard saying before she appeared in the doorway. "We're going to drive to Indianapolis this afternoon. You are to put on your new serge."

"O mother,—" the child began half-plaintively, but she stopped, and Hewitt could hear her pattering slowly up the heavily carpeted stairs.

When the woman entered the room, Hewitt arose and stood gazing at her as she drew a chair closer to his and sat down. He was breathless. She was, he thought, the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. He grew more embarrassed, but she smiled. When she smiled Hewitt could have knelt to her. Her half-curling dark hair was drawn into a loose knot rather high on her head. Her eyes were also dark, and they held such depths that Hewitt felt he dare not look into them for fear of losing altogether his control over his power of speech. Beauty of other kinds had affected him in the past in this way, but he had never before seen a woman whom he could honestly call beautiful. It gave him a start. He was not at all aware of her clothes. She might have worn silk or calico; he would never have known. Her poise was perfect. She sat with her fingers interlaced on her lap. A dimple played in and out around one corner of her sweet mouth as she talked.

"Mr. Smith sent you?" she said in a soft tone that thrilled the boy even more than the child's had done.

"He — He said you wanted to order some books and magazines."

He was not sure just what he had said the moment the words were out of his mouth. He was, indeed,

sure of nothing, except that he had never seen so perfect a being.

She smiled.

"You are a stranger here?"

She was not certain how she had guessed it. There were a great many young men in Alston whom she had never seen, and certainly many whom she did not know. But she felt there was something *different* — that was the term discriminating people always used in describing Hewitt — about this gray-eyed, impressed boy sitting opposite her with his serious gaze fixed so steadily upon her.

"I — from Chicago," he managed to say.

"I, too, came from Chicago," she said, with another smile that brought the delightful dimple into play again and completely upset the little equilibrium Hewitt still retained.

It was only after she had given him the list of magazines she wanted that Hewitt became master of himself, during the mechanical act of writing down the names, and was able to impress her with the fact that he was at least reasonably intelligent. Then she subtly led him into giving her his views on modern literature. Without realizing that he was losing his embarrassment, he talked fluently to her of his own enthusiasm for some recent poetry and drama. When he stopped and heard her remark that she wanted Galsworthy's new novel, he withdrew into his former uncomfortable position and was terribly afraid that

he had tired, or worse, had bored her with his conversation.

"Wells has a corking new book out," he began to say. Then he stopped, debated with himself, and finally ended with a timid glance up at her from where he was listing her desires in his notebook.

"But I do not like Wells," she said, smiling.

"You *must*!" he burst out. "He is the best of the present-day English writers."

"Are you sure?" she asked, the dimple standing out boldly. Instantly he became uncertain just what his position on Wells was. He could not remember what he had ever read of Wells.

"I rather prefer Bennett myself," she added, amused at him, but not showing it. Instinctively she recognized his attitude as a tribute. Naturally, a beautiful woman cannot be beautiful for over thirty years at least without knowing it, and without realizing just what a weapon her beauty is.

In the end she chose a play of his lauding, several novels she had been only partially certain about, and a new edition of "Vanity Fair."

"After all, the thing will never be made more amusing or more gripping than Thackeray made it," she said, in naming the last.

"He is great!"

She laughed outright at this.

"That is a 'great' tribute for such a harsh young critic to give a dead author," she said, as he rose to leave.

"Perhaps his being dead is what makes me so certain," was his smiling retort.

During the remainder of the day, between tasks, Hewitt's mind kept going back to this interview of the morning. The exact words of the conversation ran the gantlet of his self-criticism a hundred times. He vaguely felt that he had not contained himself enough, that he had let his foolish tongue run away with him, and he chided himself unnecessarily for blushing and acting the booby before her wonderful beauty. Sometimes, in reviewing the scene, he felt he had been too distant to be impressive; at others, he frowned over his lack of dignity. With increasing difficulty, as the day advanced, he conjured up a picture of her face as it had looked when she smiled. Once or twice early in the day a perfect remembrance of it flashed into his mind, but in the thousandth part of a second it was gone, and a blank was all that remained when he tried to repeat the trick. He felt a queer longing to pass the green house, although he knew she had gone to Indianapolis.

The fluffy-haired girl at the book store was friendly. Hewitt curtailed her privileges of being first-on-the-spot and therefore the logical one to make the advances, however. He preferred to be told things in a round-about way by Mr. Smith, or to find them out for himself, to having them told him by a girl of no great beauty of feature — compared to Mrs. Stewart, for instance — although there was an appealing prettiness about her eyes that Hewitt, robbed of his contempt for

all young girls, might have felt drawn to. But he chose, when a lull in the trade made his time his own, to linger over the "weeklies," rather than to follow up her advances. He might even be said to have snubbed her.

The other clerk, whose name Mr. Smith had mentioned in introducing Hewitt as Joe Bales, held himself rather aloof. He seemed, however, from what Hewitt could judge of his conversations with various young girls and men and who wandered in to talk to him during the day, a nice enough chap. But on the occasions when Mr. Smith was not present he appeared to be attentive to the fluffy-haired girl to a marked degree — marked, that is, to Hewitt, who was the only observer, for when any of his friends came in he was plainly unattentive. And the girl, understanding his desire to make her inconspicuous, honored it and kept in the background.

Hewitt's selling of a bottle of ink and some linen paper to a man whose subsequent happiness seemed to hang on the result of his selection was his chief activity during the afternoon. He was almost driven to wonder why he was there at all. At times he even felt himself in the way. Also, although he was not prone to mind being alone, a twinge of disagreeable loneliness did steal over him once when Joe Bales became engaged in a more than usually animated conversation with three attractive girls who came in ostensibly to buy the kind of magazines such girls would buy, and lingered to talk to Joe.

It suddenly occurred to Hewitt that everyone in Alston was very social. In Woody's he had sometimes been secretly irritated at the frequency with which people, who insisted on being social when he had no such aim, ran in upon him and Mr. Woody. Not girls, of course, except such serious minded, older girls as took an interest in his high school precocity and had poetic or sociologic enthusiasms similar to his own. But important people *had* paid attention to him. Professors stopped to exchange words with him; their children treated him with respect; he was a fixture at Woody's, a good worker, an accommodating salesman, an interesting boy.

Hewitt was glad when Mr. Smith called to him from his desk and asked him to type another letter for him, although that meant a great deal of hard work on account of Mr. Smith's mentioned weakness.

"You can make out the orders for those books and magazines of Mrs. Stewart's, too," he was told after he had finished the letter. "She brought in a check while you were out to lunch. By the way, she said she liked you,—that you were intelligent."

A tingle of pleasure traveled along Hewitt's backbone. Then she had been impressed with him!

"You can work evenings next week. After that you can stay two nights a week," Mr. Smith mentioned, and the implication that he meant Hewitt's week to lengthen out indefinitely was strong. Indeed, that morning was the last on which the week of trial was ever mentioned between them. "You can arrange

with Joe and Miss Rowe as to which ones. You need n't stay this week. We're not very busy. Getting along all right?"

"All right, I guess," said Hewitt.

"You'll do. Mrs. Stewart knows intelligence when she sees it. Half those boys who think they can work in a book-store believe it's a small matter whether they know one book from another."

That, with the memory of Mrs. Stewart's approval, kept the feeling of loneliness which had been growing all the afternoon from returning. Most people did n't matter; just those he really cared about did. And Mrs. Stewart remained for a long time, even though he saw her only once or twice during the winter, one of those who did matter. Such beauty could not be lightly dismissed. He considered framing a sentence to Mr. Smith to bring forth some expression of his recognition of her beauty, but the thought that Mr. Smith might think him forward or ungentlemanly in commenting upon the appearance of a customer held him back. He fixed upon openings, such as, "Who's considered the best looking woman in Alston?" or, "By the way, that Mrs. Stewart is a mighty good looking woman, isn't she?" These were to be thrown out casually and with great complacency, as though the thought had just come to him while he worked. But he remained silent. He wondered how soon she would order books again.

During the moments before he was leaving for the day he glanced over the poetry in the better "month-

lies" and found one poem that he liked, a six-lined lyric in simple meter with rhymed couplets. It told of the sadness of a summer without love. He read it over several times. He liked the simplicity of expression, and the thought behind the almost childish words made him swallow hard.

"Coming to the dance to-morrow night, Joe?" called a voice from the door.

Joe finished wrapping a package and broke the cord with a jerk.

"No money," he called, with a laugh.

"Too bad. Borrow some."

"Credit exhausted," came the answer.

"So-long. Better come."

Six o'clock chimed from the clock above Mr. Smith's desk. Hewitt picked his cap from the hook on the inside of the door leading to the basement and started out.

"Good night, Mr. Stevenson," said Miss Rowe, and smiled at him from where she was putting on her hat.

Joe Bales glanced up quickly from the paper he was reading.

"Be careful, Ellien," he said, with a grin that did not entirely cover his intention to be sarcastic.

"Good night," said Hewitt, pretending not to notice.

All the way home, past the gray-stone post-office, the neat houses on Jackson Street, and the Methodist Church, he was thinking of a poem he wanted to write. It was to be about a lover who was spurned by a

gloriously beautiful woman. Somehow all Hewitt's poems, and also those of his contemporaries in Chicago who went in for poetry, were pessimistic affairs. Perhaps he took his happiness — and often he was very happy for whole days at a time — in living, saving his sad moments for written expression. The man in the poem was hurt by the disdainful woman's indifference, but he would not stop loving her. Worship of beauty was its own excuse for existence — or the lover might die. But he rather liked the first way. There was so little egotism in that attitude — or was it only baffled egotism saving itself? Hewitt, of course, did not think of this last explanation.

"Hello, Hewie!" said Grace from her position at the front door as he climbed the steps. She was enveloped in a large, ugly kitchen-apron, and looked plumper and more unwieldy than usual. "Did you like your place this afternoon?"

"It's all right, I guess," he said moodily. Grace was so — so unesthetic in appearance. And her voice! She fairly twanged out the short "a" in "afternoon." Why could n't your relatives be beautiful, he wondered. Beauty was the only feminine possession worth having, although it was only this afternoon that he had ever put it as strongly as that. For a second he hated Grace. She was so ugly.

"Father's had his supper. He wanted to drive over to Markleville to see about a horse."

"Oh," said Hewitt to this.

"Supper's on the table. Come on in."

Hewitt went into the bathroom with its tin tub incased in wood, its dark marble lavatory, its wooden shelf containing a bottle of crocodile liniment,—“For Man and Beast,” he noticed on the label,—and a bar of unused perfumed toilet-soap. He was slow about getting rid of the afternoon’s grime. He kept thinking about his poem. And then he stopped a long time to examine his face in the scarred mirror over the lavatory.

“Come on to supper, Hewitt; it’ll be cold!” called Grace.

“Here’s a card from Paul,” she told him, when he came into the dining-room.

The post-card showed the library of the University of Chicago. It was taken from the Midway. Hewitt stopped to identify exactly the spot at which the picture had been made. He was a long time reading the card, despite the memory of Mrs. Stewart’s notice of his intelligence.

“Found what you wanted? Remember my advice. Margaret sends love. Paul.” So ran his brother’s brief message.

Hewitt had no appetite for the broiled steak, fried potatoes, and salt-rising bread Grace passed him. He did not touch the pie she had placed beside his plate.

“Now you’d better eat something,” she said with a frown. “You haven’t had enough to keep a mosquito alive. Eat some more of this meat. Grandpa’s had all he wants, and it’ll have to be thrown away.”

After supper Hewitt sat out on the porch until the electric-light on the corner glared into his eyes. Then he went upstairs and settled himself at his table to write. He first wrote a letter to Paul in which he told him that he had a position at ten dollars a week, but that he thought he could get more soon. Grace and his father were all right, and Grandpa was rather weak. He himself had had a fine trip down from Chicago.

He felt sure Paul could not read his longing to be back in Chicago, even between the lines.

This letter addressed and stamped, he put a sheaf of typewriting paper before him and started to work on his poem, though he now had less heart for it than he had had earlier in the evening. He had great difficulty with the first line and made four starts before it suited him.

Hewitt was in the midst of this act of composition when Grace knocked on his door, opened it, and looked in.

"What are you doing, Hewie?" she asked.

Hewitt was nonplussed. You do not like to make the confession to your sister that you are engaged in writing a poem.

"Reading," he said, shifting the sheets under his arm. He did not consider this a lie; it was primarily a defense of his mature rights to do as he pleased without being questioned.

"I wrote to Paul," he added, however.

"Did you? I suppose you would n't like to go to

the moving-picture show downtown, would you? Father's home."

Her voice sounded as if she expected him to refuse, and that drove him to a delinquent and forced, "Ye-e-e-s, I'll go." He had only three lines of the poem finished, and he wanted six.

"I'll be down in a minute," he said.

"Good."

"What time does it begin?"

"There's one show begins at eight."

"All right, I'll be down."

CHAPTER V

IN mid-winter Hewitt was again sent to Mrs. Stewart's to take an order for books, but on the occasion of this visit, because he had spent so much time since his first sight of her in worshipping her and writing hopeless poetry about her,— without really feeling at all hopeless,— he was determined to be more composed and so was less amusing. She had no means of knowing why he gulped awkwardly on being dismissed, or that he wanted to run back, snatch open the door, and kiss her hand from a proper position on his knees.

During a winter whose greatest excitement was gained through his excursions into new realms of science and art, Hewitt gained some insight into the life of Alston, Indiana. He found, for one thing, that the paucity of youths having the same interests as he had, was amazing and saddening. Most of the boys he met during the first few months in Alston cared about only one thing — to have a "good time." They were capable of earning it. They strove manfully at their work in order to gain the money necessary for this "good time." Some of them were even ambitious. They wanted more money so that, instead of going to Indianapolis in some one else's "roadster,"

they could some day go in their own. Smoking and drinking made up a part of their "good time." They danced continually, and had "dates" with the more popular of the Alston girls whose fathers had made or inherited money.

But the crisis of these "good times" were certain trips to Indianapolis, which they made from time to time in pairs or groups, and from which they always returned home penniless but exhilarated. Hewitt heard suggestive items concerning these trips from Joe Bales, who continued during the winter to be his fellow-workman and who was a party to all the social stunts in which the younger Alstonians of a certain type were concerned. Joe "went with" a girl whose father was president of one of the largest banks. He had "gone with" her ever since they were in high school together, although they were often not on speaking terms, Joe being a fickle boy who craved variety. Joe confided to Hewitt that eventually he might marry her, though her father would n't let them marry as long as Joe showed no better signs of being able to support her than he had done so far. Not that Joe was worried by his inability to support a wife.

Miss Rowe left in the early winter, for some reason that Joe seemed to know about but did n't mention, and the next girl Mr. Smith hired was a plain one whom neither Hewitt nor Joe liked, and who was not bothered by young men generally. As long as Miss Rowe had been there Joe had seemed to feel that Hewitt at any moment might take it into his head

to be more than friendly with the girl, thus depriving him of prerogatives unquestionably his up to that time. Hewitt was often disturbed and vaguely discomfited by the long talks Joe and Miss Rowe had behind the projection where the basement stairs went down. These always took place in Mr. Smith's absence. Once Hewitt had heard them scuffling back there, and he had whistled to Joe to warn him that Mr. Smith was crossing the street from Abe Kahn's. They had had no previous arrangement as to this signal, but Joe guessed at the significance of it and was busy unpacking some boxes of paper when the owner arrived.

Hewitt resented these happenings. They made him uneasy, and he became more distant than ever to Miss Rowe. He screwed up his courage on one occasion to remonstrate with Joe.

"Cut it, good boy," Joe laughed, with no rancor.

"She led a fellow on," Joe told him confidentially after her departure. "She'd go the limit. I'm not going to take any chances with her. She's going to get somebody in bad some day."

Hewitt did n't like these confidences, but he listened because he did n't want Joe to think him silly about scruples. He had always supposed there was a code of honor among men concerning these things, but Joe and his associates seemed to have no such feeling.

"Hello, Joe. Heard the latest? Jane Brown's going the pace. She'd better watch out," was the "juicy bit" poured into Joe's ear within Hewitt's hearing one

day. And a few days later he learned that Jane Brown had been sent East to school. "Her mother found out some things, and her father kicked Clem Wilson out the other night," came the word to Joe.

Joe suggested, by reason of his growing friendliness with Hewitt, that the two go together to Chicago some week-end. For some reason Hewitt could not understand, the other never seemed to think of taking him to any of the dances in Alston, or of getting him a "date." "He never seems to care much about girls," Joe would have told you apologetically, if you had inquired why he acted thus.

Hewitt rejected the offer of company to Chicago by never referring to it. He made a hurried trip to the metropolis when Paul was married, but that was his only journey during that winter. He had no intention of endangering his college money. After Mr. Smith raised his salary to fifteen dollars, he religiously saved ten dollars a week. He read, or went to the picture shows with Grace when duty demanded such sacrifice. He became more and more quiet as the winter wore away. Most of the few conversations he had were with Mr. Smith about politics. He said little at home. Two or three times during the autumn he was seized with a terrible longing for Chicago, and once he asked Mr. Smith to let him off for a week-end to go; but he changed his plans at the last minute. Going was too much like bowing to unnecessary wishes. Letsky had at first written him long letters,

but after the first few months these stopped. He realized that the men who used to "save the world" in the bookstore had closed their circle to exclude one who had gone away. That was natural, but he missed Mr. Woody's fine talks about the classics, and Letsky's tirades, too.

More and more as the winter passed Hewitt shut up his personality in a shell composed principally of books and the thoughts they stimulated. He lived a secret life within. He had his moments of intense excitement over a new scientific discovery or a newly found torch in the literary world, but there being no one to share these with, he kept them to himself and lived a placid, colorless existence — placid, at least, to the observer — in working and thinking.

Only at night in his room, undisturbed by customers or peering bystanders, he entered that fascinating land of the fancy, the key to which is ever in the hand of the imaginative. Then, in the manner of Sir Samuel Pepys, "to bed," and up betimes to begin again the round of a day's labor which would add a dollar and sixty-six cents to the savings which, in their turn, would carry him out of all this dullness into the land of heart's desire.

One day in January Miss Rowe came into the store when neither Joe nor Mr. Smith were there. The girl who had followed her as clerk had been dismissed directly after the Christmas rush. Eleanor Rowe came back to where Hewitt was sitting at the typewriter, copying a letter as complicated and misspelled

as the first he had ever copied for Mr Smith. She used the telephone to talk to a man whom she called "Teddy," and then sauntered in the boy's direction. She stood back of him, with one elbow on a pile of books, a long brown fur thrown over her shoulder hanging down her back. Hewitt spoke to her and continued his work. Just as he was drawing the sheet out of the machine she sat down on the arm of Mr. Smith's chair, which was drawn up close, and swinging one small, high-heeled shoe back and forth, began to talk.

"Where's Joe?" she asked.

"Out on an errand," Hewitt said.

"When'll he be back?"

"Before long, I guess."

"Say, what'd Joe ever tell you about me?" She quizzically examined Hewitt's face at close range. "I don't care so much about Joe. He's awfully fickle. He's all right when there's nobody else. He's been going with Gretchen Harrow since he and Helen broke it off, has n't he? Say, did he ever tell you anything about me?"

She looked down at him with a puzzled, pleading expression in her blue eyes that disarmed him. He felt she did care about Joe. Nevertheless, he wished she would go. He did n't want to talk to her. He slipped another sheet into his machine and went to work again.

"Mr. Stevenson, did he say anything about me?" reiterated the girl.

Hewitt looked up at her with a touch of sympathy in his gaze.

"No, he has never said anything about you to me. Joe's a nice boy. But listen. If I were you, I believe I'd let him alone."

She slid down from the chair and stood with her arm touching his shoulder. Then she leaned over him and put her lips close to his ear. He moved restlessly and stood up. She drew away and pouted.

"What I was going to say was," she began, with lowered eyes, "why don't you come out some time?" The question did not sound brazen as she said it. Rather it was a timid attempt to soften his apparent hardness. She seemed shy in putting it.

Hewitt frowned.

"Why, I—I don't go out with girls. I'm too busy."

"Busy? Don't you like girls?"

She came closer to him. He started to move back again from her, but suddenly she turned her face up to his and spoke quickly, breathlessly.

"Kiss me, Hewitt," she said.

Her lips were on his before he could push her away. Indeed, for a long time afterward he wondered guiltily if he had tried to push her away. For a second, spellbound, he stood motionless while she clung to him, her face hot against his. The next instant he had thrust her angrily from him. He walked to the front of the store, warm and red. Presently she followed him.

"Not sore, are you?" she asked as she came up to him. Her voice had the same appealing tone she had used in speaking about Joe. "Come out some time, will you?"

As she reached the door, Joe Bales swung in. He was laughing and he patted her on the shoulder. When he went back to hang up his hat, she followed him. Joe jested with her, and, still laughing and talking, they went back of the stairs. A moment later Mr. Smith came in unheard at the alley-door. He stood looking at them a moment. The girl wandered carelessly toward Hewitt, but Mr. Smith caught Joe by the arm.

"Look here, Joe, you need n't come back to-morrow. I warned you before. I'm not going to have any such doings in my store. You get out!" There was a finality in his tone that prevented Joe from arguing the matter.

"All right," Joe said, with a complacency meant to mislead his employer as to his real feelings. "That suits me. You can pay me now." But as Mr. Smith came back from the cash-register with the money, he dropped his blithe carelessness and spoke seriously. "Say, Mr. Smith, I don't want to leave. I'm not so bad. I swear this'll be the last time I'll even get near that girl. She's the wrong kind, anyway. I did appreciate your chucking her and not me before. Look here, if this was Blake, you'd give him another chance. Try me another week, will you? I'll prove that I'm straight with you."

Joe's pleading was all in vain. Presently he took his money and walked to the front of the store, his carefree air regained. He waited until Hewitt had finished with a customer. Miss Rowe had already gone.

"I'm fired, damn it!" he told him. "It's that girl."

Hewitt was sorry. He shook Joe's hand and tried to cheer him up.

"Try out at Preston's. They'll be taking on some men before long now." He hesitated. "That was a shame about that girl. You let her alone, Joe."

Before Joe crossed the street to Becker's cigar-store he had become his old jaunty self again. This jauntiness was no pose.

"I'll let you know, Stevenson, when I get something," he had said in leaving.

"If you get hard up —" suggested Hewitt.

"You betcha! I'll come around. Much obliged."

The affair ended to Hewitt's advantage, although he felt guilty about the five dollars increase Mr. Smith offered him to do the work that he and Joe had done before. As a matter of fact, Hewitt had done most of it right along. His remembrance of the girl's kissing him only a few minutes before the incident that had ended in Joe's dismissal was the cause of his guilty twinge. Of course it had not been his fault, and yet —. The twinge was not made gentler by a scarcely acknowledged admission that he had liked the kiss.

"Business won't amount to much after the last of this month," Mr. Smith explained. "We'll get some high-school girls to help in the school-book rush the end of the month. If you feel we can get along without another man, Hewitt, all right. If you want one, we'll get one. I think you can do all the heavier work, and we can get a woman. How about it?"

Hewitt thought he could manage. He agreed to stay every night until eight.

Mr. Smith secured a woman, a steady, unimaginative person, Hewitt decided, with his quick jumping at conclusions where strangers were concerned. She had a little girl who came to the store after school and waited until six for her mother.

The town, with its peculiar interests and its necessities for existence, might as well not have been, as far as Hewitt was concerned. To him it was a place in which to earn money, in order that one might leave it. Of its life he knew little, except in so far as it swung the inhabitants into his circle in Smith's store. Into that life of its people he entered,—that part of their life in which they were readers of books, magazines, and newspapers, and purchasers of office-supplies, stationery, and sporting goods,—with enough zest to persuade the owner of the store that he was invaluable as an assistant. When Hewitt was in charge that gentleman felt free to pursue other business for days at a time, certain that the traditional courtesy of Smith's would remain intact. What was done under the boy's management was thoroughly done, and

gradually the responsibility of the establishment slipped upon his shoulders, though always subject to the authority of the owner.

Real study Hewitt saved for evenings after eight, when he was free, and for Sundays. At the store he kept up his current reading.

Of Miss Rowe he saw nothing. Joe borrowed some money from him, after finding that he could n't get into Preston's until March. This young man wandered in intermittently during February with his stories of dances, bob-sled parties, fraternity smokers, and girls. Hewitt grew fond of Joe, who was matter-of-fact but rather clever in a clownish sort of way.

Hewitt seldom found a mode of expression open to himself. He lived a suppressed existence, missing poignantly, as at first, the talks he had been wont to have in Chicago with men of keen minds. He sometimes felt handicapped at being twenty, with college postponed a year. At times a vast discontent with life in general,—its uneven distributions of favor, its injustice, its hardships,—and with his father in particular, whose refusal to help him through an academic course rankled in moments of depression, surged over him and left a scum of hate that only a large dose of tramping through the dark night-streets could dissolve.

Blake Smith, skimming his way through Wisconsin, became the source of a great deal of wonder to him. He was certain that Blake, left to himself, would have settled down in Alston with no thought above earning enough to furnish him with spending money,—just

as Joe Bales did. But spurred on by his father's ambitions for him and a community feeling that college was the thing, even though one got no more out of it than social prestige and a bevy of friends who might prove valuable at some future time and who contributed to the pleasures of being young and non-self-supporting, he made his way back to the university year after year, came home gay and care-free for vacations, and enjoyed himself at home and abroad.

Mr. Smith talked a great deal about Blake, about his ambitions for him and the conduct of his life, to Hewitt.

"He can return to Alston and practice law, after he gets a degree at Harvard, and make good in his home state. It's all right for some of the youngsters to go to the city, but there's a big chance for Blake to make good right here. He has the advantage of money and family back of him. The men who constitute the government of this state come from the smaller cities every time. There's a reason for it. In a city, appearances make a lot of difference; in a smaller place, you have to have the real goods on you."

Hewitt did n't believe this. He was firm in his faith that it was only in cities, where you had to stand on your own feet and not on your father's wealth and position,—on an inference of "like father, like son,"—that a man had his real worth brought out. He believed in the democracy of cities. He, himself, had felt more important in Chicago than in Alston. The

big men went to the big places, where the scope of power was greater.

The aureole around the head of Chicago did not decrease in brilliancy. New York was a dim place where ships came to land and where Greenwich Village, a highly colored but spurious Bohemia, existed; where books and magazines were published; where you traveled when you were rich. But he knew Chicago. He knew there were men, like Letsky and Mr. Woody and brilliant university men, who did things not for money, but for purposes which had nothing to do with their material welfare. There were men who did scientific research for an unappreciative world, leaders in their field. One Chicago University man had written several novels, another had produced some fine poetic dramas, and at least one had produced a successful prose drama. Hewitt knew that these men lived on the south side of Chicago. The thought kept him busy with his books. The big men lived in the cities, Mr. Smith to the contrary notwithstanding.

Ernestine Smith dashed into the store at intervals to see her father. She was a pretty girl, small, piquante, with a pouting mouth her father never tried to resist. She drove an electric automobile that her father had given her when she graduated from high school. She teased him, petted him, and demanded things of him. He was even prouder of her inability to do anything except amuse herself than he was of Blake. "Now when Ernestine gets married—," his favorite expression when talking about her, always

brought a smile to Hewitt's eyes. The boys in Joe's set hovered around her in turn. Joe always referred to "Ernestine's new case."

Miss Smith seldom noticed Hewitt, but he was not offended at not being treated with the same consideration as marked her attitude toward Joe. Joe was in her set. He belonged to the best local fraternity. He was her kind.

Hewitt recognized, without giving the matter much thought at first, that he seemed not to be anyone's kind in Alston. In the autumn he had been superior to this distinction. He had not wanted to be anyone's kind — in Alston. So back to his books he went.

One March day, bright with a promise of spring, Hewitt burst the bonds of his silence. He and Mr. Smith were standing over a table of new novels near the front door.

"Rotten lot of novels," Hewitt exploded, with a laugh.

"Oh, not so bad. What's the matter with them, Hewitt — or with you? Grouchy?"

"Not grouchy, at least. But 'spring has come,' as all the poets who break into the 'Linotype' say, and I'm ready to let loose on the American novelist and the American public."

"H'm," commented his auditor. "Plunge ahead."

"Well, take that!" Hewitt pointed to a new book by a popular author whose supply could never catch up with the demand. One or two novels a year slid from his facile pen, to the disgust of the critics and

the delight of the buyers of books. "That's so poor it's a shame to charge a dollar thirty-five for it. Cheap, trashy, misleading, sentimental, romantic rot! It has the same relation to good literature that the 'Alger' books have to real child classics.

"Which reminds me of a story the boys tell about the young Hesler boy — the one the youngsters in our neighborhood call 'Reading Hesler.' He borrowed five 'Alger' books from Jim Inwood one night, and took back the whole five early next morning. He said he had read three the night before, and the remaining two that morning before breakfast. How's that for a record for the 'Alger' classics?"

Hewitt stopped to laugh, before he continued his tirade against the American novelist.

"The trouble with the American novelist is that he wants to keep people from thinking, instead of making them think."

"All right. That's why Ernestine reads. She wants to stop thinking for a minute."

Hewitt flushed in the effort to keep from expressing his opinion of Ernestine's brain capacity.

"People want to be entertained," Mr. Smith went on.

"That's what is the matter with this country. People are so anxious to be entertained that their minds will atrophy from disuse in another generation."

"H'm."

"There are some intelligent people in this town who prefer a good book to a poor one, but the average per-

son wants some light, frothy, 'entertaining' piece of nonsense that will make life look beastly bad or angelically good. They don't want the truth."

Mr. Smith sold a dictionary to a customer, while Hewitt's disgust with the reading public grew hotter.

"Hurrah for Howells?" questioned Mr. Smith, when he returned to listen to his clerk.

"You're right. If we had a few more real seekers after truth in this country — why, England has more to the square inch than we have to the — the state!"

"H'm. But they're not bright enough over there to pay their industrial workers a living wage."

"Neither are we. And when we do, it's only because we're so prosperous that we're ashamed to starve people in a new country that's been running over with natural resources for a few generations. What we need is a good dose of socialism."

Hewitt was getting excited. This violent objection to current novels, to the selfishness of the rich, to any number of things no one had ever heard him mention, had been boiling deep in his system for six months with no escape. He released it now in a cloud of steam.

This display was to Mr. Smith what his daughter's novels were to her — entertaining. He thrust the conventional outlook at Hewitt, explained human nature to his own satisfaction, and, to the scorn of the young iconoclast, lauded American institutions.

"Tradition's the thing, Son. Why, when I go to

the Methodist church and sit there Sunday after Sunday listening to sermons preached on Bible texts and spoken in English that would give your delicate nerves the shivers,—it's so Hoosierish, full of 'ain't's' and 'folks' and so on, I don't think much about whether that church's doctrines are modern or not. The main thing I think about, when I think about such things at all, is that the Methodist church is a good old institution that's stood the wear and tear of time and does a lot of good in the world. My father and my grandfather, and some others before that, belonged to the Methodist church. There's a lot in tradition you'll never learn till you're middle-aged, Son. And unless you open your mind, you're the kind that may never learn at all."

"Tradition is the stumbling block to progress," retorted Hewitt. "The fact that our fathers did a thing such and such a way is the very reason why we should n't. If the Puritans had been satisfied to let Charles the First do as he pleased, as their fathers allowed some of the others to do, we would n't have had parliamentary control as soon as we did."

"H'm! I can't argue English history. Can't remember it. Stick to America, and I can understand it—perhaps."

Hewitt laughed.

"If our fathers had thought England was good enough for them, you would n't be living in comfort in Alston, Indiana, right now. They did n't stick to traditions."

"Perhaps they were sticking to *some* traditions," Mr. Smith affirmed. "Anyway, they brought a good many with them."

"Squarely caught," Hewitt admitted. "But what we remember them for are those they broke. Then there's this about traditions, Mr. Smith. There'll always be plenty of non-thinkers of lethargic backbone to see that traditions are well-guarded. What every society needs is a group which is interested in picking to pieces the traditions their fathers found satisfactory and throwing away the bad parts. We need —"

Out of an automobile stepped a tall young woman of perhaps twenty-five or more, dressed very smartly and trailing a fur over her arm. Ernestine Smith jumped out, too, and the tall girl flung one arm carelessly over Ernestine's shoulder. The girl who was driving the car laughed at something they tossed back at her.

There was something very attractive about the tall girl, despite her intimacy with Ernestine. Under ordinary circumstances this would have prejudiced Hewitt against her. He stopped his speech about what America needs to protect her against the ogre who pursues the young and causes them to turn and stick their tongues out in childish irritation at its enormously potent tentacles, and looked at her. She was not beautiful, judged by standards set by placid beauties enchanting of feature and poised in the knowledge of woman's most powerful asset, or by the standard

set by Mrs. Stewart, for example. But the individuality of her clothing and its expensive simplicity, together with the natural distinction of her tall, almost thin figure, drew eyes, where Mrs. Stewart's placidity would have remained unnoticed. Then, once you had looked carefully at her face, you forgot standards of beauty. The clear-eyed animation of her expression, the personal tribute in her glance, her soul,—as Hewitt afterward took to calling that something alive in her which drew people to her,—shone upon you and blinded you to the purely physical.

Not that Hewitt was aware of all these things on the first occasion of seeing her. He merely stopped talking and looked at her, acknowledging her attractive.

"Here's Mary, Dad!" Ernestine was excited. "We've just brought her down from the train."

"Hello, Mary!" Mr. Smith squeezed her hand cordially and looked nearly as glad as Ernestine at seeing her. She held his hand while she whispered words that everyone could hear into his ear.

"Fatter than ever!"

Mr. Smith beamed complacently, while Ernestine and Mary laughed heartily.

Hewitt effaced himself, but he could hear the girl deriding Mr. Smith for all his weaknesses in a way to make him proud of possessing them,—the little idiosyncrasies he cherished with an egotism that made them seem deserving of praise.

"He still is wearing his hat, Ernestine darling!"

Mary told his daughter, hugging her. "Has he had it off since I left Alston? It's the same one he had last summer, I remember. It was brown, and this one is brown. Has he no shame? Does n't he ever buy a new one?"

Mr. Smith continued to beam.

"Money, Dad, money," Ernestine demanded. "Mary has n't had any lunch; so we'll run over to the Grand and get something."

Her father put a bill into her hand, and she and the tall girl hastened out to the automobile, with a wave for a generous man. Hewitt could hear them laughing as the car started off.

Mr. Smith was still cheerful over his bout with the visitor, and presently he went back to where Hewitt was working.

"Why did n't you stay up front there, Hewitt? That was Mary Young. She's been in California for the winter. Just came home to-day. She's lived here off and on with the Trimble's ever since she graduated from some girl's college in the East. She practically lives with the Trimble's,—Dr. Jimmy, you know. Her mother's married again and lives in California; so Mary stays here the greater part of the time. Jolly girl."

Later in the afternoon, when Hewitt was helping Mrs. Chancellor fill some orders for office-supplies, Ernestine and Mary Young came back.

"Where's dad?" Ernestine half-pouted to Hewitt. Mary leaned over and kissed her on the ear.

"I don't believe he has entirely disappeared, dear. You'll find him."

Ernestine jerked away pettishly.

"Where is he, Mr. Stevenson?"

"He left about an hour ago. I think he went to the bank."

Ernestine turned away.

"You might thank the young man," she was reminded.

"O Mary, you make me tired. Thanks," she turned to say to Hewitt, however, with the pout breaking into a smile.

"Who's the boy you asked?" he heard Mary ask as they went out.

Hewitt reddened as he tied up the last order and gave it to the delivery-boy. He approved of Mary Young. She was n't Ernestine's type at all.

A day or two later he was discussing a book of poetry with a teacher.

"It's an anthology," he was saying. "It's fairly well selected. Five years ago an American publisher would n't have risked an anthology of recent American verse. This is a good sign."

Mary Young had come in while he was talking. She hurried, with her graceful stride, to Mr. Smith's desk. She was dressed, Hewitt observed, in a close-cut blue suit and a small, veiled hat.

Hewitt sold the book. From the cash register Mr. Smith beckoned to him.

"Hewitt, I want you to meet Mary," he said.

"Hewitt Stevenson, Mary Young. He's new since you were here, Mary. He's a Chicago product. He thinks he knows a lot."

They all laughed.

"You see, I asked Mr. Smith to introduce us," explained Mary. "I hate to think there is anyone of importance in Alston whom I don't know."

Hewitt, in his embarrassment, took her jest about his importance seriously.

"I'm — I'm not exactly what you'd call 'important' in Alston," he apologized. She mustn't be deceived about his value to this city of his temporary adoption. Ernestine, for instance, who was evidently her devotee, had a very certain idea of his unimportance.

"Don't say it!" she warned him, with a smile, that was full of understanding. "Anyone who has b-r-a-i-n-s"—she spelled the word—"is important anywhere in the world. Good-bye," she said to Mr. Smith. Then turning to Hewitt: "I want to lose myself for an afternoon in that soothing country contained between the covers of *Harper's Magazine*. Get me one, will you? Thank you. I'll be calmly optimistic in an hour."

"You're not pessimistic now?" Hewitt inquired, with a solicitude which was not forced.

"Never! Who would like me if I allowed myself the pleasures of pessimism?"

"I would," he wanted to say, but aside from the childishness of the assertion, he feared to presume on

the slightness of their acquaintance. Hewitt was not a plunger.

After that he thought of Mary a great deal for several days. Indeed, she usurped Mrs. Stewart's place as the center of his personal thought. The next time she came in, however, she was in blithe conversation with Ernestine and some of her friends. They were all younger than Mary, and hung upon her words. She nodded to Hewitt, but did not stop to speak to him. He turned quickly to pick up a book he had knocked from a shelf when she entered. He was disappointed and was inclined to hate Ernestine. Indeed, his hatred of her as a silly, brainless little snob flashed over him in a fiery wave. He was so certain that Mary's not talking to him was due to her! But he fought back the fury that for a moment enveloped him. Instinctively he felt sure that Mary Young would never be influenced by Ernestine's ideas. What had he expected? Surely not that she should stop to converse with him, a stranger, whenever she came into the store. Yet he had hoped for that, he knew.

That night Hewitt did an unprecedented thing — he read the society column of the newspaper. He did it surreptitiously in his own room, and he found an item announcing a bridge-party at the Trimble's for Mary Young, "who until recently has been with her mother in California."

His asking Grace at supper if she had ever heard of Mary Young brought a gleam of dislike into his sister's eyes.

"Yes, I know who she is. Everybody does. She's been in California. She lives with the Trimble's over on Twelfth. Why?"

"She comes over to Smith's with Ernestine — that's all. I was just wondering."

Grace looked suspiciously at him. She did n't like Mary Young. She had seen her downtown and in the roadster with Tom Brandon several times during the summer before. She could not have told you why she did not like Mary. She had those extremely firm prejudices for and against people which were always founded on the most trivial items observed at first glance. And she never changed. The origin of her dislike for Mary may have been a hat which Mary had worn quite unsuspectingly long before, or it may have been Mary's association with Tom Brandon. Every one knew Tom's weaknesses, and Grace's principles would have been all for punishing him for them.

Grace was an assiduous reader of the "society" column of the daily paper. She knew the names and membership of every club in Alston, and their number was legion. She wondered vociferously whenever some one who was supposed to be invited some place was not asked. She followed the list of guests at functions painstakingly, and wondered. She knew more about the actual goings and comings of Mary Young than Hewitt would ever know. Her disapproval of the Alstonians who danced, played bridge, and went to parties, was intense and sincere. The

Methodist church was firm in its stand against these vices. It was not firmer than this member.

Hewitt saw her disapproval of Mary Young and he never referred to her again.

CHAPTER VI

FOR twenty years Hewitt Stevenson had been gathering impressions. The process was for the most part subconscious. What came, came. He was not at all an active agent in the harvest; his passivity was colossal and unprickable in that, as in other directions. He was an embryonic thinker. His thoughts were not worth much to other people, but were greatly to his credit. Young adolescents who have this desire to think, we designate as dreamers, and so are done with them. They are rather a nuisance.

Managing a book-store under a man who had owned a book-store in Alston ever since there had been one to own, did not consume one fourth of Hewitt's mental energy. He did n't have to think much. He just did things with his hands and a corner of his mind. Under more favorable guidance and a more lucid understanding on the part of mature persons who were in close contact with his physical existence, but who had no conception of the seething of his mental life, he would have groped less among the impressions hurling themselves into his perceptions. He would have arranged, catalogued, discarded, preserved, and discriminated among them. Deprived of sympathetic help he buried himself in himself. Had he been inherently nervous, instead of merely temperamental, this condi-

tion might have brought on an introspective morbidity which would have undermined the wholesomeness he would later attain. His inheritance of a strong body from pioneer ancestors who had tilled the soil, with a strict clinging to all those harsh virtues which make in the end for racial vigor, tided him over this phase. His taking no part in the life of Alston was no manifestation of an eremitic tendency in his makeup. He was, at twenty, tinged with the strong egotism which makes a man dominate his social group or despise it. However, it was not an assertive egotism; it was merely the egoism, the introspective round of the adolescent, enhanced by loneliness only half-acknowledged, until it fills him with a conviction of the superiority of his thought over that of others.

Mary Young's notice of Hewitt flattered him. He was filled with the same overwhelming joy that greeted Mrs. Stewart's comment upon him. In Chicago the incident would have been less important. Surrounded by others whose brain processes were similar to or acuter than his own, the slight attention that Mary Young's asking for an introduction to him and referring to his brains hinted at might have assumed its proper perspective. There he was not a portrait hung alone, but a part of a large group-picture.

In Alston, however, things were different. From contact with Joe, from fleeting but pleasant glimpses of Blake and from less savory insight into the life of Ernestine, Hewitt had come to think of these as representative of Alston. People seemed to be living

very much on the surface. They avoided the depths. All mental life was concerned with the social relation, social being narrowed to mean "society."

Joe Bales and Ernestine and Blake never thought. They had no interest in their city, their country, the world, or humanity, except as a hunting-ground where, clad in "good" clothes which were up-to-the-minute as to fashion, they sought pleasure.

This game did not, in Joe's case, seem particularly elusive. He found it in Becker's cigar-store, where he played pool and smoked. He found it in the corner drug-store, talking to the girl by the cigar-counter or with other boys in similar pursuit of this tame animal at the tables back of the soda-fountain, where they sat while consuming lemonades, frappés, and various other concoctions. He found it in plenty at dances. It almost reversed normal processes and pursued him, when he was just developing a "case." Afterward, when the affair had continued long enough to pall, he had to return to Helen Baxter for awhile and give over hunting for the time being.

Joe could not have explained to anyone just what it was in people that made them candidates for the position of fellow-pursuer of pleasure, but he always knew after a glance and a word whether a boy was eligible or not. Hewitt was not, Joe felt, and Hewitt recognized the justice of this decision, because he had made similar decisions with regard to his own coterie in Chicago, the requirements being different but the principle remaining the same.

There was a time,—just before Mary Young's arrival in Alston,—when Hewitt had spent several March evenings spoiling his study with wishes that he were more like Joe. The "Joes" of Alston had such a good berth, such an accepted one, which became almost attractive when you looked upon it day after day. At a time like this his thoughts always turned to Miss Rowe. He had not seen her for some time, and he and Joe had not spoken of her, although on several occasions Hewitt had intended to bring up the subject.

At the same time that this thought of Miss Rowe appeared, however, some talks he had with Paul pushed the other back. Paul had lived and learned; he knew that, whereas he had not been hurt by his experiences, other men were. Hewitt's hints of ardent temperament had made him afraid for the boy, too.

"There's a strong instinct in us, Hewitt," he had said on one occasion, "an instinct which the ministers and churches say is animal, and hence bad. I don't believe that, and neither will you. That instinct has a purpose, of course. It gives us most of the purest joy we have, and it insures the race against extinction. It's not primarily bad, but an abuse of it brings more misery into the world than any other thing I know. There's a healthful outlet for desire. Overstimulation ruins a man's nervous system and leads to other evils you know about. Absolute denial, which is very uncommon, often does, too. The only solution is marriage. You prepare yourself. Get an education, and

then marry some nice girl who enjoys the same kind of thing that you do."

All this was said just before Paul's own engagement. He had been very serious.

Paul could not have told Hewitt any fresh facts about this basic instinct. The latter already knew them from science, on the one hand, and from his experience on the farm on the other. His thoughts were quite clean in this direction. His normal curiosity had been uncorrupted by vulgar stories and ugly allusions, because his father had forcibly injected the information into the heads of farm-hands that they must "talk clean or get off the place." His strict Methodism made him feel strongly on this subject.

Charles Stevenson always arose at the same hour on Sundays as on week-days. That hour was five o'clock in the summer and six in the winter. He did not require his family to live up to his standard, but he never could sleep late, he said.

March gave way to a warm April that sent the buds bursting into flowers and leaves, and brought the grass in deep abundance. Dandelions sprang up on Alston lawns, fat robins chirruped and sang to burst their plump throats, and sparrows grew noisier and bolder.

"Earliest spring in fifteen years," Charles Stevenson announced one Sunday morning, as he climbed the steps to the summer kitchen to which Grace had already transferred the cooking. "This ought to be a great fruit year, unless we have one of those May frosts. That old apple tree out there's about ready to bloom.

It don't seem to have enough sense to know its fruit 's not worth pickin'. How about soft-boiled eggs for breakfast?"

He had already driven out to the garden and back, and he was hungry.

Grandfather creaked his way to the front porch after breakfast and grinned a toothless smile as he stretched his stiff limbs and pounded his cane energetically upon the floor. The world had metamorphosed over night. The tennis-courts across the street were covered with grass and weeds, young and flourishing. The trees along Jackson Street were filmy with bursting buds and young leaves. The sky's clear blue was broken by flurries of fluffy clouds that skidded lithely toward the north, blown by a brisk wind that was laden with a delicate fragrance which even the smoke from passing trains could not altogether obliterate.

Old Mr. Stevenson sniffed, and his wrinkled face broke into a ludicrous but convincing smile.

"Fine day, Charlie," he called back to his son, who was still in the dining-room eating his toast and soft-boiled eggs. "This is sure spring, I guess."

He sat down slowly and carefully in his wicker chair, placing his cane against the wall and then rubbing his hands together with a semblance of briskness.

"Makes a fellow young again, Charlie. What 's the matter with that boy Hewie? Why ain't he up and out fishin' this fine day?" The old man chuckled over memories.

Hewitt slept until nine, as was his custom,—a custom inaugurated while in Chicago with Paul and gloriously to his liking. He got up to the accompaniment of a yawn and a tattoo by some jays on the slate roof of the house. He sleepily rumbled his hair. The sun was pouring in through the east window, and he pulled down the shade before he thrust on a bathrobe and made his way downstairs to the inconveniently located bathroom. Here he turned on the water and splashed contentedly in a hot bath.

Presently he heard Grace calling at the door, "Hewie! Hewie! I'll put the eggs all ready on the table. You can make your own toast. The coffee's on the stove. You clean up your things afterward. I'll not stay to church."

Grace never stayed to church, but weekly she announced her intention not to do so. According to the dictates of her Methodist conscience and habit, she went to Sunday school every week, but her Methodist conscience could not compete with her sense of duty to her family where "a good hot dinner" was concerned. Her information as to her ten-thirty intentions was extraneous, but she gave it regularly, together with the place of Hewitt's breakfast supplies and the order to clean up afterward.

Hewitt thought she had gone upstairs to get her hat and black silk coat, the latter a useful garment taken out of a trunk every spring and replaced there in the autumn as soon as the cold winds of October called for heavier garb. But presently her voice rose again

above the sound of the draining of water from the tin tub. She spoke with unnecessary force, Hewitt felt, but he did not mention this feeling.

"Hewie, why don't you go to church to-day? It's so pretty outside! I pressed your suit last night after you went to bed. You ought to get a new one for next Sunday. You go to church to-day. It'll do you good. Father never goes any more, since we've been in Alston. He says a city church is n't the same. It looks as if some one in the family ought to go."

"All right. Perhaps," he called.

"Now you go, Hewie."

That Hewitt, after his breakfast was finished, *did* go to church was not because he felt any need of a scouring of his moral machinery in order to make him run more smoothly along the social track.

During the winter he had spent the long, dull, lazy Sundays in study. In that way he had filled the gap which Paul's absence made in his recreation. In Chicago they had gone on fine days to one of the beaches or parks. Once in a great while they had gone to the church service held in one of the university halls, non-sectarian meetings at which well-known doctors of theology and philosophy spoke to congregations of students. On Sunday afternoons Paul went to see the girl he eventually married, and Hewitt read or went to Woody's, where Letsky, Adam Conrad, Horace Bowman, and Mr. Woody gathered to talk.

Although he had ceased to feel any enthusiasm for Sunday since coming to Alston, Hewitt had found no

difficulty in contenting himself with his books and his study, interrupted by strolls to the drug-store for cigars.

But spring, the brilliancy of the morning, and the vigor engendered by the ostentatious fecundity of the earth, gave birth to a restlessness in his blood that would not quiet. He whistled over his breakfast and the subsequent cleaning-up in accord with Grace's demands. Afterward he sat upon the porch, fumbling through the morning paper with its flamboyantly colored supplements and unable to concentrate on its subject-matter. He examined the budding apple-tree, stuck a dandelion in his coat lapel, moved about the yard, went into the house, and came out again.

At ten-thirty he brushed his hat and started down the walk.

"Not going to church, are you, Hewie?" his grandfather called after him.

"I thought I might."

The old man laughed, a wheezing, uncertain laugh that grated on Hewitt. He was familiar with his grandfather's scorn of religion. He did not like it. He himself was not a Christian, he would have told you courageously, contemptuous of your Alstonian surprise; but being yourself an unbeliever in the accepted forms and having a member of your family a scoffer were two different things. The young might be fascinating doubters; the old should be respectable, especially since in this case a gray background of bowing to conventional gods was desirable in order to

sustain the contrast with his own orange differentness. Thus he did not stop to discuss his going to church with his relative. He thought atheism very extreme, anyway; he himself was only an agnostic. So far, science, he felt, confirmed his views.

A peculiar, subtle quiet enshrouded the city. People were up and about as usual, but there was no clatter of wagons and trucks, no noise, except at intervals the sound of a jolting street-car on Eleventh, or the heavier rumble of a traction-car. Even these sounds seemed muffled. Men sat on their verandas surrounded by sheets of the morning paper which they were forgetting to read, absorbed in the signs of an ordinarily belated spring. Sunday schools ejected a host of children into the streets. Their apparel was the finery of the newly arrived season.

Hewitt paused in front of the Methodist Church. No, he would go to the Presbyterian. Denominations made no difference to him. The Methodist Church was less beautiful as a structure than the other, and when Hewitt lent his presence to a church, he preferred to do it in the midst of esthetic surroundings.

Groups of church-goers, well-dressed, clean, of all classes, moved down Jackson Street. There were so many churches in Alston! The number had always surprised Hewitt. Everyone, he thought as he watched the crowds, except the men on the verandas who were reading and gazing, went to church.

In front of the Christian Church were lined automobiles, carriages, and buggies in immense array. A

group of young girls ran out of the side door as he passed. They were lithe, gay, and pretty. Their eyes were on two boys across the street in front of the library — the Carnegie Library, of the type found in nearly every town of any size in the Middle West. They stepped on and off the curb into the street, self-conscious in their best suits and new caps, half-shy, and yet determined not to show it. A girl whom Hewitt knew to be the daughter of an ex-Governor who lent dignity to Alston was walking in front of him. She was leading a child by the hand.

The Presbyterian Church, a new structure, was architecturally beautiful. It was of light brown brick, with white stone decorations. The crowning beauty was, however, the Tiffany windows, which had none of the crude ugliness associated in the Middle West with the term stained-glass. They were of soft, exquisitely blended colors, and were the work of an artist.

Hewitt passed into the church with dignity. There was a subdued murmur, a near absence of sound, in the auditorium. Hewitt knew this to be the "society" person's church. The Keiths and a few other families having money — enough money, that is, to be counted rich in Alston — belonged here, but the congregation was principally made up of those people who dressed more than ordinarily well, who aped the ways of the rich, if they themselves lacked wealth, and who were at least on the fringes of "society." A great many pretty girls, their enthusiasm and liveliness well

under control, were already seated. The ex-Governor's daughter, whom Hewitt had always liked because of her sweet friendliness, sat with a group of the best-dressed people. A scattering of young men, some of whom he knew slightly from their association with Joe and Ernestine, were there, or they wandered in before the service began.

Through the earlier part of the service Hewitt was too taken up with thoughts aroused by his first appearance in an Alston church to hear much of what was being said. The music of a surpliced quartette pleased him. It carried him away into the heaven of the purely emotional. He did not think at all during the music, but only listened. Music always had the effect of stiffening his body, while his soul soared to heights,—soared and soared.

Were these people in Alston, Indiana, as religious as their attendance at church indicated, he wondered, while the collection was being taken. Was there a strong conviction in their hearts that Christ was divine, that God was Love, that there was a power for good guiding them,—a conviction that all these things were true, despite accident, disillusionment and sorrow, and although these people had strongly the air of coming little in contact with any experiences except the superficially satisfying? Did they believe in the creed they recited with such glibness? They spent a great deal of money every year on churches. They helped support foreign missions for the propagation of Christianity. But were they sincere?

Hewitt wondered actively. He was a doubter, prone to believe that others would find it hard to believe what he had trouble in accepting. He was sure that people in Alston went to church with more regularity, and gave more freely than similar people in Chicago. The latter seemed to him to be not very strong in religious expression. Not that the average person of the same class in larger cities was more wicked,—wicked, at least, according to Hewitt's standards,—but they expressed their religious instinct less. Was it because there was less amusement to be had in Alston on Sunday? Or was it,—and Hewitt welcomed this conclusion with a smile of relieved surety,—because public opinion, fostered by the few sincerely religious and austere respectable, demanded church-going and giving of men, and because Alstonians, known and judged by these standards, followed its dictates to preserve their reputations as respectable citizens?

These smartly dressed people before him, secure in the possession of means, if not of wealth, well-fed, contented, self-sufficient, subscribed to a doctrine having its origin in the life of One who spoke to the poor, fed the hungry, healed the sick, directed His counsel against fine raiment and content and self-satisfaction. How could these things be harmonized?

The minister was a frail ascetic with gray hair. He pushed it back from his pale face with long fingers when he spoke. He recited a sentimental verse about a dead child in closing. He enunciated with a precision which was irritating to Hewitt, who had heard

little of his sermon, being too involved in his own speculations.

“‘Woe unto you when men shall speak well of you,’” Hewitt remembered having heard.

By eleven forty-five, when the sermon was finished and the music began again, Hewitt had arrived at the conclusion that Christianity was a failure. He was an enthusiast. He was an idealist. He was twenty. “Question, question!” Letsky had told him. Without that advice he would naturally have questioned, appraised and misappraised, lauded and damned. For Hewitt was young.

On the streets afterward there was a suppressed gaiety, a manifest cheerfulness which, despite the failure of Christianity, had its effect upon him. He, too, responded to the feeling that all was well. Whether or not people were consistent in their Christianity, Sunday was a pleasant day, provided you had gone to church, and kindness and democracy was in the air. Georgia Keith, the ex-Governor’s daughter, greeted him with a smile. Several business men spoke cordially to him. He had a sense of belonging to Alston for the first time, and the feeling was not unwelcome.

Hewitt walked downtown on his way home to buy some candy he decided he must have. A surprising number of people were on the streets. Many of them were country people, boys and young men especially, who broke the monotony of the week on the farm by these visits to town. They were standing on the side-

walks, leaning against the buildings, or were walking aimlessly in and out of cigar-stores and the cheaper restaurants.

Hewitt remembered that his father had often made stirring tirades against the exodus of the country people on Sunday to the city. Country churches were disappearing rapidly, he was accustomed to say with angry vigor. As a good Methodist and a devoted attendant and supporter of the little country church close to the Stevenson farm east of Alston, he had been disturbed by this modern enemy of the country church. Traction-cars were an evil, when looked at in this light. More than one dilapidated, desolate, country church was scattered through Indiana, deserted during the last few years. People wanted excitement, and were satisfied with nothing else.

Dinner at the Stevensons was a dull affair. Hewitt always wanted to fidget through the last of it. The heavy content of his father, Grace's attitude of self-praise for having prepared such an excellent meal, his grandfather's noisy supping of soft foods—all these elements tended to inforce the Sunday dullness. Aglow during the first part of it from his unexpectedly exhilarating attendance at church, he lost his cheerfulness toward the end, when his father broke into a long discourse on intensive farming, including a veiled chiding for a son who had scorned a life on the land. Hewitt's uneasy movements during this lecture brought a reproachful glance from Grace.

The heaviness which seized him after dinner made

him want to sleep, but he resisted this impulse. Time enough later to sleep, and besides, sleeping in the day-time gave him a headache. He pulled a chair into the side-yard under the gnarled apple-tree with its suggested green of a coming leafage and tried to read a magazine he had brought from the store. He turned the pages and read the advertisements, fascinated for the moment into forgetting how sleepy he was by that of a steamship company describing tours to the Mediterranean. He then read the advertisements of schools, soap, insurance, breakfast-foods, automobile-fixtures, guns, bicycles, bathroom-plumbing, and books.

An automobile or two, carrying gay seekers after an afternoon's recreation on the open road, passed the house. Some one waved to him from one of them.

Hewitt was nodding sleepily over a travel article, when Dorr Coates, a twelve-year-old living west of the Stevensons, tiptoed up behind him and tickled his ear with a long grass. Hewitt jumped accommodately, and ended by seizing the child by the collar and thrusting the grass down his neck. He threatened to throw him over into his own yard by the heels,—and Dorr wriggled fiercely.

"Come on over and shoot!" he screamed, as he was tumbled into the soft grass.

"Shoot? Shoot what?"

"Targets. We've got one up on the shed. You stand out in the side-yard and shoot the rifle at it. Dad did this morning."

Hewitt stretched his arms over his head.

"Too sleepy," he yawned.

"Sleepy!" Dorr sneered, hitting his neighbor's back. "Wake up, lazy! Come on over!"

Hewitt jumped the low iron fence, rusty and unstable, into the Coates's yard. Dorr had convinced the fifteen-year-old boy across the street that no sport was equal to shooting at a target, and so the group consisted of three.

Dorr allowed Hewitt, as the oldest and most deserving of honor, to have the first five shots. He kept a careful record of the points made on a huge sheet of paper which came with the set of targets.

"Poor! Only forty-five points," he called when Hewitt turned over the rifle to the next shot. That target was harder to hit than Hewitt had supposed.

The fifteen-year boy from across the way did better. He was the least bit inclined to be scornful of Hewitt's mediocrity, although he hid this scorn under a fine pretence of manly tolerance. His manner said: "We cannot all perform at sports equally well in this world, which nevertheless favors the skilful. So be it; but I will be lenient with the less skilful." Dorr himself ran up eighty points out of a possible one hundred and twenty-five.

When Hewitt's turn came again, he carefully raised the gun to his shoulder and took a much longer time in sighting. He hit the shed half an inch off the round target, and frowned.

"Five!" shouted Dorr after his second shot. "Ten!" he called at the third. The fourth shot hit wood again, and the fifth brought him a twenty.

"Thirty-five!" was Dorr's seemingly gleeful announcement.

The other boy looked sad in sympathy.

Hewitt was piqued. He wiped his forehead, as though the condition of that part of his anatomy might be responsible for his poor marksmanship. His look of consternation brought a roar from the Coates's veranda, where Mr. Coates was shaking his fat sides over the match.

"Go to it, Stevenson!" he cried. "I tried myself this morning. It might be easier, I guess. Those youngsters practice every day with their rifles, and then pretend to be superior when we compete."

"I have n't touched a gun for five years," explained Hewitt. But he was still piqued and regretted his inferred apology. He applauded magnanimously the trial of Coates, Junior, and was in the act of taking the gun from the hands of the third shot when he caught sight of a long "roadster" swerving around the corner of Jackson Street and gliding slowly into Fourteenth. Mary Young was in it, as Hewitt noted at once.

Here *he* was with an air-rifle in his hands, caught in the act of shooting at a target with two infants! Hewitt grew so red, in spots on his cheeks and close behind his ears, that Dorr noted and commented on his condition. It was not in Hewitt to handle a situation

like this as calmly and naturally as another would have done. He shook the rifle in shooting, ruining an already bad aim and hitting the roof of the shed. Dorr's glee was unrestrained.

Hewitt could have turned a more dangerous rifle on himself without regret. Mary Young, the only person in Alston whose recognition that he had a "b-r-a-i-n" counted, had seen him shooting at a target with children on a Sunday afternoon! Of course he could not know that Mary Young looked casually at him with the intention of waving her hand, and on seeing his absorption in the game, did n't wave, but went on with her conversation about the Trimbles to the man at her side. As far as Hewitt was concerned, the afternoon was spoiled. He was desolated because he had not turned to speak to Mary. Any interest he ever had had in hitting the target evaporated rapidly, and he fired his remaining four shots into the air in a very unsportsmanlike manner. Dorr and his companion acknowledged this verbally, and after standing on the steps to talk to Mr. Coates about the weather—a topic upon which he now had no convictions,—Hewitt leaped the iron fence and resorted again to the magazine and the seat under the apple-tree.

He was more bored with the magazine, however, than he had been when interrupted in the travel-article by Dorr's demand for sport. The glassy blue sky, with its blown fragments of white clouds, the emerald of the grass, the fluffiness in the tops of the gently

swaying trees,—these no longer held the indefinable joy of spring. Hewitt resented the day's brilliancy. What was the use of Sunday and spring and youth, when one had only this? "This" was, presumably, the apple-tree and a chair and a magazine which he did n't want to read. He wanted something. He wanted something he had never before in his life acknowledged that he wanted,—if he had ever desired it poignantly. He had been busy for a good many years with ideas. Now suddenly, on this spring Sunday, he wanted people. He wanted the easy, gay *camaraderie*, unquestioning in its heartiness of good-fellowship and its easy acceptance of it, which was Joe Bales' and Ernestine's and Mary Young's, though he dimly understood that Mary's was snarled in other relationships which he understood to be bound up in the social game.

Hewitt's restlessness and moody dissatisfaction drove him downtown. The moving-picture shows were closed. Public opinion had demanded it. The corner drug-store was thus the rendezvous of the young on Sunday afternoons. Hewitt walked over to the soda-fountain and ordered a drink. The boy thrust it at him. He was in a hurry, for Sunday was a busy day. The action hurt Hewitt, hurt his feelings, which had suddenly become very delicate and were in a condition to invite hurting. He had half-hoped for a sight of Joe Bales, although he was sure it had been Joe who had waved at him from a car earlier in the afternoon. Some of Joe's friends surrounded the

cigar-counter and leaned against the candy-cases, or were seated at tables clinking ice in their glasses. These habitués nodded at Hewitt, and then went on talking or eating or idling with cigarettes. He left without anyone having spoken to him. As far as the stir of his presence in Alston created, he might as well have been in Alaska or Alabama or any other place beginning with an A. To the seasoned Alstonian, Hewitt Stevenson, once of Chicago and now of their midst, did not exist. And to-day his not existing for them made a difference to Hewitt.

The rest of that day he spent in writing letters to Mr. Woody and to Paul, and in reading Oscar Wilde. Not that Oscar Wilde was widely read in Indiana in 1913, or at least in Alston, but Letsky had read Wilde because other people did not read him, and Hewitt had begun by reading him because Letsky did, and had ended by reading him because he filled a need. To-day the plays, with their brilliant repartee, their sophistication, and their cynicism, made him contented again. They raised him to a plane where Mary Young's having seen him shooting at a target with children and his non-existence for Joe Bales's kind of man became unimportant matters with which he had no concern. Among people like those in Wilde's plays he would have shone, he felt sure. He would have scintillated, been worldly cynical, yet good at heart, been self-sacrificing even, like *Mrs. Erlynne* in "Lady Windermere's Fan." He identified himself indiscriminately with men and women. He ate and thrived upon

Wilde's brand of romance, and in the presence of the delightful sophistication of this individualist he felt that it was not romance at all, but reality. How fine that bit which ran thus:

"Lady W. 'Why do you *talk* so trivially about life, then?'

"Lord D. 'Because I think life is far too important a thing to talk seriously about.'"

Hewitt chuckled, enthralled over Lady Agatha and her "Yes, Ma-ma,"—Agatha who was so fond of "photographs of Switzerland," "such a pure taste."

By supper-time, when Grace placed the "cold bits" upon the table, Hewitt was once more happy in that fair country haunted by the creations of a master-mind. He even became talkative.

Charles Stevenson discussed the farm-garden. It was the core of his life. The weather filled him with excitement. He ate cold chicken vociferously, and talked fertilizer and seed and hot-beds to his heart's content.

In the fastnesses of his room afterward, while the cooling breeze, fresh and more than ever laden with the perfume of bursting growth, fanned the curtains and by eight o'clock had to be shut out by closed windows, Hewitt read and thought. Much of his thought on this evening was concerned with a distant day when Alston would feel proud of having harbored, though only for a year, a boy who had put the town on the map, so to speak. He was not Alston's kind, and he felt glad that he was not. In the stimulation

of a new grip on himself, fostered by Oscar Wilde's outlook, he knew his kind to be much superior to the variety to be found in Becker's cigar-store and the drug-store. Young know-nothings, these, to whom the pleasure of the moment was everything! He, too, if he wished, might grip the fleeting joy; but he chose to prepare himself. Some day —! How he was to distinguish himself was, of course, a question that need not be immediately answered. After an afternoon and evening of Wilde, the drama might suit him. He would do bright, witty, clever things, until the world noticed. And then —!

Ten o'clock found Mr. Wilde's products lying discarded on the floor, while Hewitt gazed ecstatically at the ugly, cracked, stained wall-paper above his bed and saw a glorious life in the sunshine of Paris, New York, or Rome — or the tropics! Alston might pass him unnoticed now; in a few years he would come back —! No, he would never come back, unless it should be to hold up its inhabitants to the derision of a cultivated world who would read his account of "A Journey to a Small Town Where I Spent a Year of my Youth."

Hewitt went to sleep very happy, the conscious center of a universe that Joe Bales did not know existed, although Joe, at that moment in the swing on the Gainor veranda, was the center of his own satisfactory little universe, which glowed in the sun of his sixty-seventh love affair.

CHAPTER VII

MR. SMITH thought his assistant a very intellectual young person. His opinion may have been biased by the fact that there were so few intellectual men in Alston that one who had rather radical notions stood out in relief against a background of youths who read nothing at all and thought nothing at all, except about girls and other amusement. Mr. Smith praised Hewitt to his family with no visible effect upon his daughter, Ernestine. But this praise had a marked effect upon Mary Young, who breakfasted, lunched, and dined at the Smiths when not otherwise occupied.

Mary was immensely fond of the young men in Alston. She found them most amusing, and they looked upon her as a superior but highly entertaining person whom fortune had tossed into their midst and who ought to be fêted accordingly. She was as popular as Ernestine,—more popular, indeed, since everyone liked Mary, even Hewitt. Hewitt, in addition to having Mr. Smith's recommendation as to intellectual qualities, had his gray eyes and a boyish seriousness. Mary liked novelty, in fact, she craved it. Every newcomer to Alston, within the range of "society," was cultivated for a time by Mary—if they proved interesting enough.

Mary entered Smith's store one day during the week following Hewitt's initiation into the church atmosphere and Sunday loneliness of Alston. She was with Mrs. George Patton, the daughter-in-law and wife, respectively, of the two owners of the *Alston Times*. The Pattons had not only money, but influence. Mrs. Patton belonged to the best clubs and was president of the Women's Council, an organization made up of representatives from all the clubs in the city. She had a penchant for managing things. Generally this is not a popular trait among other women, but Mrs. Patton remained popular because of a cordiality which was stereotyped but convincing to Alston.

Mary was in gray. Hewitt's eyes, not often observant where women were concerned, took in her appearance at a glance, and he worshipped.

Mrs. Patton wanted a novel. She thought the author's name was Watts, but upon further consideration, aided by a gloved finger placed upon her tightened lips, she thought that was n't the name.

"Let's see," she pondered.

"Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth!" whispered Mary Young to Hewitt. She had smiled and summoned him with her finger when Mrs. Chancellor had started forward to wait on them.

Hewitt thought this an excellent joke and laughed, while Mrs. Patton pretended a great disgust for Mary and her suggestion. She expected to be made fun of when Mary was around. Everyone expected it.

People *invited* Mary to ridicule them. It was flattering.

"It was Wells!" Mrs. Patton remembered, with a start of pleasure. "'Tongue — Bung'?" Could that have been it?"

"'Barriers Burned Away,' by E. P. Roe," Mary suggested.

"Mary J. Holmes?" Hewitt contributed, with a splendid show of wit.

Everyone was jolly over the purchase of "Tono-Bungay" and a new travel-book that old Mr. Patton wanted to review for the Tourist Club. Hewitt, himself, was as gay and airy about the whole sale as anyone. Being democratic in the extreme, he felt very important in being jolly with Mrs. Patton and Mary Young, social leaders as they were. His shirt involuntarily expanded and gave him an overcheated appearance, as though he had been taking breathing exercises with a new kind of patent exerciser guaranteed to make a muscular giant of the poorest specimen. Little thrills of *joie de vivre* chased each other up and down his backbone in alarming succession, for his backbone in its hibernization in Alston had become unaccustomed to such activity. It was a kind of hermit backbone, but it liked these pseudo-chills of happiness.

Mrs. Patton had been introduced in the beginning, so that a business transaction of buying two books assumed the proportions of a social gathering under

the espionage of Mary, who always made a social gathering out of everything, at least so long as her star was in the ascendancy. It was near enough being fixedly in that position in Alston to enable one to say that she *always* was jolly about everything. Her jollity was a refined kind of jollity, needless to say, but it was contagious and invigorating. Everyone was a little jolly himself in consequence.

"I'd ask Hewitt's opinion of Wells," Mary began when the purchases had been made, ignoring his right to be addressed as Mr. Stevenson — though Hewitt would never have required that formality of Mary — "if he was n't certain to break into a violent tirade, and be lengthy. He's awfully clever, Mildred. But he knows it, and he glories in entangling innocent women in long arguments that no one but he knows the answer to. He does n't believe in woman's suffrage, either. Imagine!"

"Oh, I do!" Hewitt hastened to contradict her. "You deserve the vote. You managed things so well in agricultural prehistoric times, when you managed everything except the fighting, that I'm all for giving you a chance again."

"Did you know we managed things in prehistoric times, Mildred?" Mary sighed. "Perhaps we had better have the man lecture on the history of our sex at our meetings. Soon there won't be any fun in being a suffragette. We won't have any opposition."

"Even inheritance once came through the mother," Hewitt volunteered further, feeling proud to teach Mary and Mrs. Patton.

"Bravo! Isn't he sweet?" Mary flung to him through Mrs. Patton, while she gave his arm a pat.

"Sometimes I doubt whether all women should vote," Mrs. Patton said slowly. She looked at Hewitt so steadily that he became disconcerted and dropped his eyes. "Some of us are so — so catty, shall I say? I often discover the tendency in myself." She was sorry to make this confession but was determined to be honest before a man who was willing to grant all arguments in favor of her right to vote.

"You are a dear. I refuse to listen while you malign yourself. No matter what other women are, George wouldn't want me to let you call yourself cattish," and Mary placed her hand gently over her self-accuser's mouth.

"George says women are more likely to take the personal attitude than men," the other continued when she was allowed to speak.

"Tell George for me, darling, that he is wrong. I have known so many men!"

"You talk as if you were forty, Mary."

"I'm eighty, if experience with men ages a person."

"Conceited girl."

"No; a simple statement of facts."

"Women would naturally be personal, because their place has always been in the home, where personal re-

lation is fostered. Business women, I should say, are not inclined to be personal," Hewitt suggested, with a fear that if he did not say something, he would be altogether left out of the conversation.

Mrs. Patton shook her head.

"I think we are more self-sacrificing than men, but I still think we are catty,—the business women, too."

"Am I catty?" mourned Mary into a hastily produced handkerchief.

"I don't know, Mary. Perhaps you are not, but the rest of us are."

"I refuse to desert my sex. If the rest of you are, so am I. Don't you think I am noble, Hewitt?"

Hewitt thought other things about her, if not that, but he did not state them.

"Get your package, dear," Mary suggested to Mrs. Patton after more of this jesting, and the young man's shirt-front gradually assumed its normal position.

It was almost with desolation of spirit that Hewitt watched them depart. He wanted Mary to stay and talk. He could have amused her, he felt sure, and there was no doubt about her ability to amuse him. He needed amusement to make him forget the sad yesterday, which became sadder in retrospect, Oscar Wilde having lost his power to create superiority in the white light of Monday's labor. He was running over with information about books and the men who made them, and she would have understood and appreciated and responded, he felt sure.

But the sense of desolation soon had a relapse and

weakened, while the memory of how pretty and quick and fascinating she had been, revived. Later in the afternoon he felt stimulated and thought to lift himself out of an inferred mediocrity as a silent Alstonian by opening a conversation with a young manufacturer of mechanical toys. The latter came in nightly to buy a New York paper. He was clean cut, sturdy, of medium height, broad in proportion, and had a fine head. Hewitt had been impressed with him before.

"Fine spring weather," Hewitt began unexpectedly.

"Yes," answered the manufacturer. "The country looks great. My wife and I drove out last night."

"Of course it would take more than spring to freshen up Alston," Hewitt laughed, with an air of conscious superiority to country villages. "What I never understand about small places is why they don't build better buildings in the business section. People here, for instance, take excessive pride in their residences, but look at that group of shacks across the street there. A Chinese laundry, a restaurant, a shoe-shining booth — all in a one-story building that you'd think would have been torn down long ago. Why, in Chicago —"

"Oh, of course. The bigger cities have to rebuild. The more they are like New York, the better, — or so they think. And after all, that's what you're after for Alston, isn't it? You want it to be more like Chicago, which is exactly like New York. Now my idea for the business section of a small town would be a *pretty* square — a park, a fountain, trees, and so

on,—more like abroad—with plain, dignified one, two, or three-story buildings grouped around the green spots. No ugly structures would be permitted.”

Hewitt thought about the suggestion for a moment.

“I believe you’re right. That’s an idea. There is n’t really an artistic building in Alston. Well, you might call the post-office and the Carnegie library artistic. At least they’re simple and dignified.”

“What a town like Alston needs is some pretty trees and lawns downtown,” went on the other. “Somebody long ago, before land in cities became so valuable, decided people ought to crowd together. I suppose they were afraid somebody else would run off with the town hall or the church—some of our respectable ancestors who distrusted everybody whose father was n’t a preacher. Business has to be concentrated, but my idea is to concentrate it in a beautiful spot, instead of in one like this.” He pointed to Meridian Street, with its rather narrow roadway made still narrower by tracks down the middle of it, its crowded sidewalks, and its asphalted, treeless expanse unbroken by a single beautiful spot.

“Where do you come from?” Hewitt asked curiously. People who live in Alston and yet harbored ideas astounded him.

“New York City.”

“I might have known that you were n’t a Hoosier. Everyone in Indiana—the native-born, I mean,—thinks his town is the best on the face of the earth.

He would n't trade it for Florence or Paris or Rome, with all their art-treasures thrown in. You can't teach a Hoosier anything about his town."

Hewitt was improvising. He had never thought of Hoosier pride in just this light before, but he quickly warmed to his subject. He had a little bone to pick with Alston after a disappointing Sunday when nature had tried to teach him something he did n't want to learn about man and a social law.

"The way the cow wandered a century ago is the way for the Hoosier highway. That's Hoosier philosophy for you!" he added after a moment's thought.

"No, that's not Hoosier nature you're talking about; it's human nature," the young man laughed. "You don't suppose the English are any different from that, do you? Or our worthy Puritan ancestors? Or the natives of the Buckeye State? We're all alike. You swear by Chicago—I suppose you lived there once—and I secretly swear by New York. 'Good little old New York,' I say to myself—when I'm far away from it. We all like the things we've known when we were young and when life was still full of illusions."

"I didn't seem to care for the farm," Hewitt grinned.

"Wait until you are fifty," returned the other. "An Indiana farm will then be Paradise with a capital to you."

Hewitt doubted this statement.

"Did you ever see a beautiful small town?" he asked the man.

"A few,— in the West. You see, the minute a man goes West for good to live, he breaks with his old traditions to a certain extent and starts in anew. He's no longer tied down by the idea that the way his father did things is the best way. He wants things more convenient, even more beautiful, though the average American is n't on the trail of beauty. California bungalows and apartments are a revelation to the Middle Westerner."

"I believe I'd like the West," Hewitt thought aloud.

The young manufacturer examined him carefully.

"No, you would n't," he decided. "You'd like New York. Interested mainly in books, are n't you? Well, after all, the East's the place for those who cherish intellectual ideals. There's the same difference between the East and the West in that respect as between New York and Europe. They have more art traditions abroad. The thing's in the atmosphere. The West is the place for the man who wants to live. It may be a kind of superficial living, something like Pacific Coast fruit — very pretty to look at, but lacking the eastern tang. For myself, I like the good old Middle West. You get enough of the intellectual to keep you alive. I'll take Alston, Indiana, for mine. People have time to live, and they're not always breaking the speed limit. It's a pretty good town!"

Hewitt was sorry he felt that way about Alston.

It detracted from the respect that up to this moment he had felt for him.

The man started out of the door, but paused to call back, with a laugh:

"Of course, between you and me and the gatepost, I'd like to build most of Alston over again,—around that pretty park with trees,—lots of trees! It might n't be a bad plan to have a little stream trickling through the middle, with plenty of fish in it. Then all the tired business-men could satisfy their desire for their favorite sport right at their own doors. Good-night."

Hewitt was still smiling over the young manufacturer's parting words when Mr. Smith jogged in, perspiring from the exertion of his walk from the bank two blocks away. He removed his brown derby to wipe his forehead, and fell back in simulated exhaustion in the swivel-chair, which sagged dangerously under his weight.

"These Catholics!" he groaned. "They don't want the world to progress. They're stones in the current of progress. They want to dam things up." He puffed forth a voluminous sigh. "I 'spose I'm a little sweeping — just a little. There are some good Catholics. You're not a Catholic, are you?" he asked quickly, with a suspicious glance at the boy.

Hewitt grinned.

"Methodist-trained agnostic," he replied.

"All right. Now, about these Catholics. Gerald Meyer's always one of the first men here to give to

public funds. Perhaps he thinks he ought to even up in some way for that brewery of his. But these pesky Burkes who run the clothing-store over on the Square! I've been working half the afternoon trying to get old Mike to give fifty or twenty-five or ten dollars to the fund for Boosters' Day, and do you think he'd come through with a cent? Not a red Indian! I never did have any use for Catholics. Dance and carouse around after they've gone to mass and had the priest forgive all their sins! They make me pesky hot!"

He mopped his brow again and swung back and forth dangerously in his chair.

"Boosters' Day?" queried Hewitt. "What's that?"

Mr. Smith emitted a groan.

"Lord! Where have you lived all your life, Son?"

"We did n't have it on the farm or in Chicago."

"Well, we have it here. You'll see. They're a great and beneficent institution. I helped start the first one here. All the county comes to town to see a parade and athletic contests and a balloon ascension and to hear speeches. And we give them — and incidentally the apathetic citizens of our own town — proof in plenty that Alston is the best there is, and getting better!"

This speech further exhausted him.

"Wait and see, Boy. I'm too tired after working on that blamed Catholic to tell you all the good things about Boosters' Day. Why, Abe Kahn gave fifty

dollars, while Mike Burke would n't hand out a red cent. It's the limit!"

But presently he broke out again with:

"He'll get the benefit of it in trade, just like the rest of us. Not that trade is all we're thinking about. We have Boosters' Day just out of exuberance of spirits, as it were. Proud of Alston, and want to show it, you understand."

Hewitt's day was not complete; it had been a good day, what with his chat with the social arbiters of the city and the talk with the young manufacturer who had ideas. That night, not long before closing time, he was arranging one of the show-windows for an advance supply of tennis- and golf-goods, when he was interrupted by Homer Gray, a young lawyer, who came into the store with M. H. Keith, ex-Governor of the state and Alston's most prominent citizen. Hewitt jumped down from the platform in the window.

"Hello, Stevenson," Gray called out familiarly. His position as a rising young politician and candidate for a city office made him uniformly cordial. He knew, and was familiar with, everybody. Sometimes his method was not convincing, but he did not realize that. He understood that Mr. Keith was very popular in political circles, that in his youth he had been noted for an exuberant cordiality which had won him a state-wide renown. Homer Gray considered Mr. Keith a fine person to pattern himself after. Hewitt did not like his conceited assumption, however, that

the young man could have the wool pulled over his eyes by an amateur. Hewitt never liked egotists,—that is, other egotists.

“You know Mr. Keith, don’t you? Every one knows the Governor. Hewitt Stevenson is Mr. Smith’s right-hand man, Mr. Keith; Charlie Stevenson’s boy, you know, of Fourteenth and Jackson Streets.”

The ex-Governor, a dignified, imposing, white-haired man, whose habit of glaring at people was very disconcerting until they discovered that the glare was followed by a reassuring smile and a hearty handshake, wanted a copy of President Wilson’s “History of the American People.”

“A very great man, Mr. Wilson,” he said.

“Not of the same caliber as his predecessor, Mr. Roosevelt,” Gray put in, with an important air of adding something of note to the conversation.

“They are both great men, in the popular interpretation of that term,” Hewitt began slowly, addressing himself to Mr. Keith. An unnatural stepping-out from his protective shell, in order to show his true colors, was marking his actions on this day. He could not at once understand his hardihood in feeling called upon to make Homer Gray’s remark sound colorless, but he was determined to do so. He spoke carelessly and forcefully, as though he had long been thinking about this subject and was only now willing to give the benefit of his thought to the public. He pointed out that they both were great men in such different ways

as to make intelligent comparison impossible,—like comparing the army and the navy of a country as to respective greatness. One had powers in a certain direction, the other, in another. He said what most of the non-partisan papers had been saying since before Mr. Wilson's election, and which they would continue to say until some one thought of something better, but he said it impressively. At least, Mr. Keith listened very intently, although Homer Gray tried vainly several times to interrupt the flow of Hewitt's speech-making.

"Very good," Mr. Keith commented, nodding his approval when Hewitt had finished.

"But Mr. Roosevelt's vigor —" Gray began.

"The distrust of American finance for a school-master President is a tribute to his honesty of purpose," Mr. Keith pronounced, disregarding Gray's false start. "He will make good; and the American people—the mass of the people—will have more faith in mentality and be less slow to disparage brains."

Hewitt drew his lower lip over his upper and appeared to ponder. What was really happening in his mind was that he was considering that ex-Governors were not, after all, such wonderful men. Here was one conversing with him, Hewitt Stevenson, a mere nobody, on political topics of the day, and his words were no more weighty, to Hewitt's mind, than his own. They were both saying what men all over the country were saying, although Hewitt himself had digested his

information so that now it was his own. He was not so sure about the ex-Governor's assimilative processes. The miracle of exchanging views and agreeing with so great a man politically as an election had proved this man to be, could not pass without creating a wonderful stir in his nervous system, even while he disparaged the ex-Governor. He thought, too, that in Chicago he would never have had the opportunity of talking at his ease with Mr. Keith. You never parleyed with the great in Chicago—the politically great, that is, the men who received the laudation of the crowd. The rich watched and appropriated them. But here he was, a clerk in Smith's book-store, growing chummy with a former Governor of Indiana.

Hewitt puckered his eyebrows and ignored the younger politician. What had he to do with any but the "arrived"?

"Now take Roosevelt's books—" Gray began. But Hewitt's quick, seemingly unpremeditated remark cut him short.

"Mr. Wilson's control over language is greater than that of any man who has sat in the Presidential chair since Lincoln," he said, "and all of his speeches taken together, will in time be probably admitted to surpass in beauty of language the bulk of Lincoln's utterances."

Gray turned away to look at a book lying near him. Mr. Keith nodded.

"But you must be careful not to seem too critical of the great Lincoln," he warned. "I doubt whether

we of the new era desire to be critical of the finest man the country has produced. He had the power of fine feeling. That is the secret of the people's adoration of him. Mr. Wilson has, as you say, an admirable control over speech. He is a fine man." He shook his head emphatically over the last words. He had been a Republican governor of a state that was doubtful in its party affiliation.

Gray's growing impatience here broke into action, and he moved toward the door as cheerful and politic as ever, now that he could end the conversation and regain his position of importance as the political child of Alston's leading citizen.

Hewitt's prejudice against Gray was founded, it is to be feared, either on such evidence as Grace needed to reach similar conclusions, or on the conflict between their two vocal egos, each of which wanted to do nothing so much as scream at the other when the angels of dead eagles appeared to show a preference. And of course, in any ordinary screaming contest Gray would have won, because he was a native of Alston and the author of a little book favorably commented upon by the president of a university — a little book entitled "The History of the Communistic Movement in Indiana." Hewitt must have realized Gray's advantages in order to make such good use of his latent conversational powers to an audience that consisted of a single man who had heard Gray's ideas on Roosevelt many times before.

The two men left Smith's with a cheery "Good-

night" that made the gray eyes that Grace thought should have been brown light up with serene satisfaction. It had been a good day, Hewitt's attitude said. Alston was n't so bad.

But when the local and state celebrities stepped from the door at seven-thirty he had not tasted the essence of its sweetness. Kenneth Reed, the "David" of former Chicago days, who had introduced Hewitt to the fraternity ideal and had been defended by that youth from Letsky's unconcealed scorn at save-the-world meeting, peered doubtfully in at the door a few minutes later. Hewitt was standing staring off into space, waiting for eight o'clock to roll around. He grasped Hewitt's hand with a grip that hurt.

"Hello, Hugh! Tickled to death. What you doin'?"

"Reed, you boob! When 'd you get in? What under heavens are you doing in Alston? When did you see Paul?"

"One at a time. Saw Paul last week, and when I told him I was selling bonds in Indiana this month, he told me to look you up in Alston. Just got in, and had some dinner at the only hotel I saw handy,—a good one, strange to say. What are you doing to-night?"

"Nothing, after eight. I close up then and go home."

"Not home this night. You're going to stay all night at the Grand with me, and talk a little. See?"

Hewitt glowed.

"By the way, did you ever hear of a girl named Mary Young in Alston? I met her in Chicago at a dance last year. She's a pippin. I want to see her."

Hewitt glowed some more.

"I should say so! Of course I know her. She stays with Dr. Trimble. Come on back and call her up."

That flickering tingle which had been pursuing his vertebræ during the afternoon and evening attacked them again. He was un-Hewittly speedy in leading Kenneth Reed to the telephone, and was trembling in a way that would have shamed him, had he known there was anything the least unusual in his actions. Reed knew Mary Young, Alston's fairest divinity and a very Venus or Athena among femininity! He looked the Trimble number up for him, and then obtained the connection and asked for Mary Young. His voice followed the example of his hands and shook slightly in pronouncing the words. Wonderful Mary Young! He handed the receiver the least bit unwillingly to Reed before Mary answered. He wanted to talk to her himself.

Reed laughed uproariously for five minutes, while Mary said things into the telephone that evidently were laughter-producing. Hewitt smiled inanely in sympathy, and wanted to tear the instrument from Reed's ear to hear, too. What *was* she saying?

"Lyceum entertainment?" laughed the favored one at last. "I'm on, but look here. Hewitt Stevenson

— you know him, don't you? — Hewitt and I are old pals from college days — from mine,— rather. He's my best friend, in Alston, Chicago, or any old place. He goes to the famous lyceum, too. We'll come for you about what hour? Eight? O. K."

He turned and slapped Hewitt on the shoulder.

"We're off for the great entertainment, Hugh. Methodist church. Ever been inside of a church, my boy? Yes? Seven-thirty now. I 'spose you want to put on a clean collar and get a fresh handkerchief. Why could n't I watch this store, while you go home to doll up a little? What about it?"

Anything was possible to this Hewitt with a new zest for life.

"Of course you can," he said. "Call me up at home if some one wants anything you can't find the price on."

"All right. Scoot!"

At seven fifty-five Hewitt was back, so clean as to skin that he shone. He had even managed to give a hurried shine to his shoes and had taken time to be impressed by their age. For a fleeting moment, while he observed the cut of Kenneth Reed's suit, he wished he had a better suit of his own. His was really rather shabby. He wore one suit all the time; that had seemed enough to him. He was not a Joe Bales.

During the walk to the Trimbles they talked a great deal about Chicago and the winter just past. Reed explained that his temporary journey into the world of

finance via the bond-selling route was in order to procure enough money for his expenses at law school at Harvard.

"I'm off for the effete East next fall, about the time that you enter Chicago," Reed said.

Under cover of the semi-darkness created by the overhanging trees on Twelfth Street, a darkness through which flickered gleams from the street-lights and the moon, Hewitt put his hand familiarly on Reed's shoulder.

"I'd like to see old Paul," he remarked. "Fine little wife he has, is n't she?"

Reed agreed that she was.

"But it's the single life for you and me for a few years, eh, Hugh, old boy?" he went on. "It'll be five years before I settle down on nothing a year, and it'll be longer for you. We should worry, though. It's a big world, and there are lots of things happening all the time. So why weep because you can't have a wife to support?"

Hewitt, having never been seriously worried about his inability to support a wife for many a year to come, agreed with all his friend said. He was not so enthralled by a present which had been dull until to-day, when things had brightened up, but the next year would be a great one.

Lights were shining in most of the windows on Twelfth Street. Hewitt glanced into them as they passed. The houses were well-furnished. From one of the more beautiful a sound of music issued, and he

saw a young girl sitting reading under a lamp in another.

The Trimble house was an old fashioned, white frame structure, redeemed from the commonplace by a wide stretch of lawn broken by artistically arranged shrubbery. A fragrance of lilacs was wafted to the two young men as they went up the steps to the small square veranda.

Dr. Trimble opened the door, and Reed introduced himself and Hewitt. They seated themselves in the hall and talked to Dr. Jimmy — every one in Alston who had watched him grow into manhood called him Dr. Jimmy — about current affairs. That is, Kenneth Reed talked. Hewitt's eyes kept wandering to the top of the stairs which led out of the hall. Soon he was rewarded by the sight of Mary Young. She was descending in a dark suit and wore white summer furs.

Hewitt was reminded of his manners by the sudden rising of Dr. Jimmy and Reed. In the excitement of seeing Mary he had forgotten them. Besides, he had let them grow stale in Alston; Grace did not seem to mind whether or not one remembered to be polite, outside of certain limits.

"Mr. Reed! I am so pleased," Mary Young said, with a delighted smile. "And Mr. Stevenson. To think I did n't even know you two knew each other! Terrible! And both from Chicago!"

The inference that everybody in Chicago knew everybody else brought the expected smiles.

"Tell Martha I'll be in whenever these young men

bring me home from the Lyceum entertainment at the Methodist church, Jimmy. Good-night."

Her animation was delicious. Hewitt was unable to do anything but admire in silence. Kenneth Reed managed to more than match her witticisms. They played into each other's hands in great glee, and allowed Hewitt to applaud. He walked very straight, with his head thrown back. He must not shame Mary and Reed by slouching. His habits in that direction had been bad of late. It had seemed to make so little difference in Alston whether or not you carried yourself well. In Chicago one instinctively did it, because appearances counted for so much, but several times during this uneventful winter it had seemed to him that nothing in the world, no big achievement, could have made Alston admire him, the stranger in its heart. He was in it, but not of it. Such a decision was annoying when it pushed itself into his consciousness.

The trio arrived at the Methodist Church a trifle late from the musical point of view, but at the proper moment if you were self-conscious enough to desire your entrance to be impressive. The orchestra, a seven-piece string orchestra of some merit, was playing at the moment, and they waited near the doorway. Then they were ushered to their seats half-way down the aisle. Mary sat between Reed and Hewitt. There was a stir about them as they sat down. People were watching them. Their late entrance made them conspicuous, and Mary Young always created a stir in Alston. Hewitt's desire for attention was wellnigh

satisfied by the feeling that a great many eyes were on the group of which he was a minor but throbbing part.

Mary smiled at him as she turned her head while taking off her black hat and laying it on her lap. Her attention then switched again to Kenneth. Hewitt regretted that this was so, but Reed was saying low things in her ear about Alston audiences. So he gave his attention to the people in the church.

The auditorium was crowded, even the balconies being in use. Hewitt recognized some business men and their families, many young women whom he saw daily without ever being told their names, and a scattering of young men who were factory-workers and clerks. All were rather well-dressed, and some even smartly. The younger portion of the crowd was, however, leavened with old people,—staunch church-goers every line of their earnest, intent faces said,—who revered the church and all entertainments held within its walls.

Hewitt had heard about this lyceum course. He remembered that some one had asked him to buy a ticket for a dollar in the autumn. Later, he understood, you paid more and reserved your seat. He had rejected the offer to be allowed to hear an orchestra, a quartette, some Scotch singers, a lecturer, a humorist, and a reader at intervals throughout the winter and spring, even at such a reduced figure. Such inanities—sentimental vocalists and platform speakers—were not for him. When he wanted to spend an evening

in entertainment, he preferred a good book that he could select for himself on its merits. No frappé lyceum program, thank you!

Now, to his surprise, he found that he was enjoying the whole affair. He was convinced that the presence of Mary and Reed accounted for his interest, yet — An old woman back of him was whispering to her equally aged husband:

"Mary Young. Who are the men?" he heard her say.

"Don' know. Strange, ain't they?"

"Maybe; but I think the young one worked at Smith's."

This was food to Hewitt's liking, though somewhat plainer than he would have desired.

A murmur of conversation filled in the intervals between the music.

"What is the next selection, Hewitt?" Mary turned with her program to ask him. "I can't pronounce it. Mr. Reed pretends that he can, but he refuses to help me. Do tell me, please."

Hewitt looked his ignorance.

"Search me!" he said slangily. "I only know German well."

"Oh!" sighed Mary. "Is n't this German? I only read French and —" she whispered this — "I read it with great difficulty."

"It looks like Russian to me," Hewitt ventured, while he flushed because Mary was talking to him.

"Russian?" Reed echoed. "Never! It's Bul-

garian. I'll wager you on that. Plain, every-day Bulgarian."

Mary examined him suspiciously. Then she turned to Hewitt.

"I don't believe he really knows. We'll decide — you and I — whether it sounds like Bulgarian to us. What is your idea of Bulgarian; weird and elusive?"

Hewitt was not sure about his ideas on any subject except one — Mary Young was more beautiful than Mrs. Stewart and was the most charming woman in the world. She was *delightful*. He caught his breath when she looked at him so intently, so pleadingly, including him in a league with her against Kenneth.

The music began again, and he listened.

"Was it Bulgarian?" Mary asked anxiously, when he turned to her at the end of it.

"Russian," Hewitt asserted, with such calm assurance that Reed laughed.

"I'm helpless in the face of Hewitt's mentality," he acknowledged. "He knows everything. Have you discovered that yet, Miss Young? He admits that he knows everything. He's a pupil of the great Letsky! Ever hear of Letsky? Have Hugh tell you about him some time."

"Will you tell me some time?" Mary asked Hewitt, her eyes on his so that he had to quickly glance down at his program.

"He will never tell me," she accused him to Reed.

"Oh, he's bashful."

For the first time in the history of their relations

Hewitt became angry with Reed. Bashful! That child's word! Bashfulness, the sin of babies! He raised his eyebrows and spoke into Mary's ear with exaggerated *savoir faire*.

"I will tell you some time very soon," he said, looking at her, but immediately afterward he turned to the advertisements in his program.

Later, when they were making their way out, Kenneth Reed suggested that the music had not been bad after all.

"I approve," Mary said. "Did n't you like it, Hewitt?"

Hewitt's thoughts were lost in the emotion Mary and the music had colored to a brilliancy that was yet soft with glamour. He did not hear what she said to him, did not know, indeed, that she had spoken.

"Deaf, dumb, and stone blind! 'Twas ever thus!" laughed Reed. "Up in the clouds. Now what, Stevenson? What next? Cabaret? Theaters? If not, what?"

Hewitt had no idea what there was. He knit his brow as though in thought, but Mary spoke first.

"These Chicago demands in Alston? Why, it's time now for every good citizen over twenty to be at home and in bed! The little children went long ago. Only the high school boys and girls are allowed up after ten. They dance."

"Is there a dance to-night?"

"I am speaking in general terms."

"Well, let's eat at the Grand."

"Suits me," said Hewitt, with an effort.

Downtown the streets were thinly peopled under the glare of the five-branched electric-lamps forming two narrowing rows along the main streets.

"Some town!" groaned Reed. "Behold the Great White Way!"

"Please!" begged Mary. "It's a lovely town. I love it."

"I thought you lived in California."

"Mother does. But you see I've stayed with Dr. Jimmy and Martha so much of the time that I feel as if Alston really belonged to me. I'm loyalty itself to Alston. I love everybody in the place."

"Which shows where you stand, Hugh. Wake up and thank her, boy!"

Hewitt did both in imitation of Reed's mocking spirit, but he wished his friend less noisy and less observing.

They passed through the lobby of the almost deserted hotel.

"Anything to eat here?" Reed asked the desk-man.

"Nothing after eight now. The kitchen's being remodelled."

"Great guns! I wish I lived here."

They all laughed, Reed most heartily of all.

"However you may feel about Alston, Indiana, Miss Young, I can't share your enthusiasm. Is there any place in this town where a starving man who has endured a lyceum musical *can* get something to eat?"

"Let's try Benton's," Hewitt said.

They tried Benton's, and found themselves in a close, hot room, with a counter and a row of stools running down one side and a row of tables down the other. Some boys were perched on the stools devouring sandwiches and pie.

Hewitt's appetite was not spoiled by the atmosphere of Benton's. It had already been spoiled. He nibbled with no heartiness at a club sandwich and drank a great deal of water without quenching his thirst. Mary Young whirled around and around in his head. Was there ever such a wonderful person?

Long after he and Reed had stopped talking that night in bed at the Grand, he lay gazing into the darkness, trying to conjure up a glimpse of Mary as she had looked when she asked him to "tell her some time." Her eyes drowned one! He dreamed that he was touching her face with his hands.

CHAPTER VIII

BOOSTERS' DAY, which Hewitt had n't known existed in the calendar of the saints until shortly before it dawned upon Alston, arrived with a burst of splendor in the person of the sun. Not that it came unheralded. Its glories had been emblazoned for weeks on bill-boards spread over the county. To the youthful, it rivalled circus day as to promise. There was to be speech-making and athletic contests in the morning, dinner at most of the churches and lodges at noon, and in the afternoon the crowning event,— a great parade, with floats and bands and all the other paraphernalia of a great procession. Prizes would be awarded for the best floats. Balloons would be sent up from Athletic Park, with ten-dollar bills in them. "Watch the Balloon!" "Alston, the Greatest Town in the State!" "Alston in 1830 and Now!" So read the enormous posters throughout the town and county.

The evening before this important day was fraught with excitement. People were already coming into town to spend the night with their "folks." Some farmers from the next county were reported to be camping for the night in a stretch of woods a few miles out.

A tense cheeriness was characteristic of the expres-

sion on everyone's face when Hewitt walked down to Smith's just before seven-thirty on the day of the event. The porter at the drug-store was whistling furiously and loudly, while a cloud of dust preceded his broom as he swept out the store.

"It am arrived!" he grinned to Hewitt. "Bet it 'll rain."

"Would n't dare. We'd mob the weather-man."

"Yes, suh, it 'll rain. Jest like cuhcus day, suh. Allus rains. W'y, last cuhcus day this town was neahly drownded in a bad thundah stohm that blowed up about nine o'clock, and some folks neahly did n't get home a'tall. Yes, suh, it 'll rain." He chuckled as he continued his labors on the side-walk.

The man who cleaned Smith's store had done the greater part of his work the night before.

"I don't take no chances with Mr. Smith on Boosters' Day. I cleaned all up last night," he drawled as Hewitt went in. "Don't believe you 'll find any dirt around, Mr. Stevenson. I cleaned up good last night, you bet. Mr. Smith 'll be rampagin' 'round inside o' ten minutes. I know him!" He gave a last flourish of his dust-cloth and trailed back to the rear of the store.

Before eight, according to old Ben's prophecy, Mr. Smith was on hand. He was wearing a new hat that even Mary Young could n't make fun of and a fresh spring suit. As usual, his spectacles were dangling from their string, striking his white vest as he walked. He strode back to his desk.

"Anybody called me yet?" he asked Hewitt.

"Not since I came down. Anything I can do to help?"

The man glared at Hewitt and then broke into a broad smile.

"The Lord help me if I ever manage another Boosters' Day! I've nearly drowned myself in perspiration already, and I'm not half done and it's not hot, either. I had Colonel Whitcomb from Indianapolis,—best old-fashioned speaker in the state,—scheduled for a speech this morning. I advertised him, and late last night I got a telegram that he's sick in bed. How's that for luck? Dumn it!"

This mild explosive of very doubtful origin Mr. Smith only used on especially irritating occasions. "I've called 'long distance' over this whole consarned state," he went on, "and I can't get a soul to speak." He puckered his lips in evident thought. "Look here, Hewitt. Call Eli K. Badger at Crawfordsville for me. I bet he'll speak, and he'll give 'em the time of their lives while he's doin' it. He's got a patriotic speech that'll make their hair stand on end, and half of 'em will want to enlist in the army of this great nation to-morrow. Hurry up and get him, or I'll have to make the speech myself!"

Eli K. Badger would speak, Mr. Smith found by 8:15, if Alston would pay the expenses of an automobile trip from Crawfordsville; he could not get there by train. "Pay!" shouted Mr. Smith. "We'd pay for a private car on a special train, if we

had to. Tell him to get here, Hewitt, and to get here quick!"

Automobiles were already honking their way along Meridian Street, street-cars were unusually noisy as they clattered over their uneven tracks, and an air of festivity enwrapped the town. A vendor of patent whistles shrieked his way in and out among the rapidly gathering groups of boys and men, advertising his wares by whistling popular airs on the instrument. Hewitt named him the "Infant Calliope," and bought a whistle for Dorr Coates, who came in to wait for his mother and perched himself on a table of books to watch proceedings until he was permitted to take part in the excitement.

"We can beat Muncie all to smash," he boasted. "They did n't have any kind of a team last year, and how could they work up a good one this early? Old Cap Resoner can throw curves around their batters! You ought to see Cap pitch! He's the best pitcher Alston's had since 'One Armed' Ormsby went to the big league. Old 'One Armed' was some pitcher, believe me!" He accented the "me" and drew up his shoulders to add emphasis to this praise of the hero. "He got his arm cut off when he was twelve while riding on a freight-car. He was some pitcher! Say, Hugh, what if mama won't let me blow this whistle?"

"You try it out at Athletic Park at the ball-game, and then throw it away," Hewitt suggested, feeling uneasy about his innocent purchase, now that he was reminded of Mrs. Coates's point of view.

"I guess not!" Dorr affirmed. "You gave it to me. I'll tell her you did, and then she can't make me throw it away, because that would look as if I did n't appreciate it. See?"

He attempted a tentative blast to show immediate appreciation, but Hewitt called quickly to him: "Don't blow it in here, Dorr. Mr. Smith is busy."

"Oh," said the boy, and swung his legs to show that he was not embarrassed by this reprimand.

Bunting-decorated automobiles began to appear at nine, carrying the members of the G. A. R. who were to have positions of honor at the court-house steps during the speeches. A truck with a load of muslin signs attached to long poles rattled across the car-tracks and down Eleventh Street. Women and children, gallant in spring array that was worn generally only on Sunday, began to gather along the streets.

Mr. Smith's perturbation had not decreased. He was talking to various chairmen of committees, and his tone grew louder with every conversation. He took to bellowing into the telephone, and banged the receiver up and down on the hook between calls.

"Hello!" he called into the transmitter in tones that made that instrument almost unnecessary. "Operator, speed up my connections!" Followed more clicking. "Operator, I'm running this Boosters' Day, and if you don't get me prompter service, we won't have any parade. Understand? Nine-O-nine! And be quick!"

Mr. Smith became at last entirely angry.

"Dumn those girls!" he exclaimed.

A loud honking of a hoarse horn in front of the store took Hewitt to the door.

"Mr. Smith there?"

"I'll call him."

"Ask him if he got somebody in Whitcomb's place?"

"Eli K. Badger of Crawfordsville. He'll motor over. Started about eight-thirty."

"Much obliged."

The car chugged away only to be followed presently by another.

"Smith there?"

"Yes. He's telephoning."

"Ask him where the Odd Fellows are to form for this parade."

"Jackson and Sixteenth Streets."

An enormously large man, burly and lumbering, stuck his head in the door soon after the foregoing.

"Smith here?" he queried, bulging his fish-eyes at Hewitt and grinning.

"Back there telephoning."

"Ask him where the Elks are to form for the parade."

Mr. Smith's anger was not mitigated by these interruptions. He heard the question.

"Tell him to go to hell and find out!" he roared.

"He said you'd have to ask the chairman of the

parade committee," Hewitt told the man at the door, scarcely concealing a smile.

"Is he in hell?" whispered the fat man, bulging out his eyes farther and bursting into a huge guffaw that shook his paunch of an abdomen and made the veins in his neck swell blue.

"I don't doubt it. Mr. Smith is, anyway," Hewitt said, as the man lumbered away, still shaking, to repeat the story at the bank-corner where some brother Elks were holding forth over huge, black cigars.

Dorr squirmed during this last episode. He did n't see the same joke as Hewitt and the fat Elk did, but he thought their saying a word forbidden in his household was side-splitting, and he lost his balance and fell to a sitting position on the floor from laughing.

"Watch out!" Hewitt warned him. "They want to use the ambulance in the parade."

At which Door laughed so hard that he was unable to get up, and was still sitting, bent with "the giggles," as he called them, when his mother, towing his starched and beribboned little sister by the hand, came in after him.

"Oh, Dorr, your clean linen trousers! I have a good notion to send you home for that! You've got dirt all over the seat."

Dorr was momentarily nonplussed and angry. Everything was so funny on Boosters' Day! And here was a mother, a hindrance to fun, ranting about trousers!

"They're not dirty," he denied, brushing them with both hands and keeping the spot his mother had indelicately mentioned by name to the rear out of sight.

"Dirty? Turn around!"

He backed away, red and angrier.

"They're not dirty, I tell you!"

"Well, come on," she sighed, tugged at by the impatient little girl. "Get your cap from that case and come on. Thanks for letting him stay, Mr. Stevenson."

"No trouble; sorry he got his trousers dirty."

"That's all right. He would have in a minute, anyway. You can't keep a boy clean."

The store was momentarily empty, except for Hewitt and Mr. Smith. But not for long.

Ernestine burst in, clad in a blue linen dress and looking, if one were unprejudiced, very pretty. She saw her father and ran back to him, with only a nod for Hewitt. The latter smiled and determined not to let that make any difference in the brightness of one of the few really happy days he had had in Alston. Boosters' Day was being very amusing, and he did n't intend to allow a little snob — for, after all, that was what Ernestine really was, he concluded a little bitterly — interfere with his content. He was whistling when she came back. She jumped into her electric and spun away.

A few customers wandered in, cheerful and ready to pause and pass the time of day with anyone and everyone on Boosters' Day. "Great place. Alston.

Best town in the state. Now Indianapolis was a fine city, but you could n't be so comfortable in a city of that size. You knew people in Alston, and they knew you, and yet none of this 'village gossip' stuff. Big enough to give everybody a business to mind, and a mind to mind it." And so on *ad infinitum*.

At ten-thirty, or thereabouts, an automobile drew up at the curb and blew its horn long and repeatedly. Hewitt was on his way to the door, when he was informed by a pompous, white-haired and white-goateed little man who had jumped out that he was Eli K. Badger of Crawfordsville. Mr. Badger's presence brought a gleam of hope into Mr. Smith's eyes. Things might turn out all right, despite his worry, once the morning was over. He strode on his short, thick legs down the length of the store, mopping his head as he went and panting audibly from exertion.

"If anybody stops here and wants to know what to do next, tell 'em I said to use their common sense and go ahead! And say, Hewitt, lock up and go hear the speeches. You can come back and open up in time to get the crowd, and you ought to hear them."

"I'll stay," Hewitt said.

"Do as I say. Lock up! I did n't think about it before."

But Hewitt had no desire to mingle with a warm, dusty, blustery crowd in order to hear Eli K. Badger, ex-Governor Keith, Homer Gray, the silver-tongued, and W. K. Lombard, president of the school board, make speeches on Alston, the United States of Amer-

ica, and other topics. He preferred watching the crowds, who were more interested in toy whips and shooting crackers and in each other than in speech-making. One country boy in a bright-banded straw hat, ahead of the straw-hat season, an "ice-cream" suit, brilliant tan shoes, square-toed and heavy, was getting hilarious with a whip which he held poised in one hand so as to tickle the uncovered necks of the young girls who passed. Once their attention was attracted to him, he ogled and winked and laughed, until they bantered words with him or turned away in disgust, their faces crimson and hauteur written large in their plump dignity.

"Come on, girls! I'm a nice boy. I'll buy you a balloon. Come on and get a 'sody,' girls! I've got a nickel," he called. And so on endlessly, until Hewitt had to close the door to keep out the sound of what soon ceased to be amusing.

By noon the entire state seemed to have emptied into Alston. People, people, people! The street-cars were scarcely able to make their way through the crowds, and the "interurbans" clanged their bells constantly in forcing a path down Meridian Street.

Back and forth surged the crowds.

Mr. Smith pushed in through the jam on the sidewalk before noon and told Hewitt to lock up while he went home to lunch. Mrs. Chancellor was ill. Mr. Smith himself was off to the Grand Hotel for dinner with Eli K. Badger. Hewitt caught sight of Mr. Keith, Homer Gray, and Mr. Lombard in the automo-

bile outside, the center of the crowd's temporary interest.

At noon, on his way home, he saw numerous evidences of preparations for the parade. On the corner across the street from his own house some boys were turning an immense dray into a float. A log cabin was being constructed on a platform on top of it, and several stumps and small trees were in position around it.

Hewitt smiled as a tall boy astride the roof of the log house slipped and was only kept from falling by a smaller boy who seized his foot and held him until he regained his balance.

"Hand me some nails!" called the former, when he was once again in position.

"Get 'em yourself!"

"How can I?" he said helplessly.

"I eat 'em alive!" yelled a barefoot, ragged urchin who was "helping" by pinching the legs of the boys on the platform.

"Get away from here, you rowdy!" recommended one of the workers, with a kick at the offender.

"Where's George Rogers Clark?" called some one.

"Gone home to have his mother sew his trousers. What 'd he wear his costume for this morning? He 'll have to pay for it. They came from a costumer in Indianapolis."

"Serves him right. He was so smart about Mrs. Lombard choosing him for *George Rogers*. I'd rather be an Indian, anyway."

As Hewitt came up on the porch, a woman whom he recognized as Mrs. Lombard stepped out of a blue electric-coupé and came toward them.

"Are you all right, boys?" she asked.

"Tip top, except George Rogers Clark. He tore his trousers and had to go home," said the tall boy on the roof.

"That's too bad. Don't fail to be in your costumes at two sharp. We're early in the parade. You had all better go and get your dinners now."

"We're not finished. We'll be ready. Looks pretty good, does n't it?" called the short, sturdy boy.

"It looks fine, except those trees are n't quite steady, are they?"

"We'll fix them. Don't worry. We're out for the prize."

"If you get it, I'll have you at my house for dinner tomorrow night. No. I tell you, you may all come, prize or no prize. You are fine boys to work so hard."

"Hurrah for Mrs. Lombard!" Hewitt heard as he went into the house, laughing.

"Did you come down-town?" he asked Grace from the bath-room. Boosters' Day was exciting even Hewitt, and his voice showed it.

"No; I was too busy. Was it nice this morning?"

"Lots of people. Did n't know there were so many people around Alston. Never saw so many people since election night in Chicago. I did n't hear any of the speeches. I kept the store open."

He whistled a tune that the "Infant Calliope" had been specializing on all the morning, and splashed the water into his eyes and out again without losing a note, except when the towel crossed his mouth.

"How was Eli K.?" he asked his father at the table.

"Eli talked like he had his mouth full of hot mush. If I was him, I'd stay in Crawfordsville."

"Homer Gray fluent?"

"He'll be in the Senate before he knows it. He can talk more and say less than any living orator."

"What about Lombard?"

"Talked sense. Told what the school board had done this year. He did n't embroider it any, either. Lombard's all right."

"Who else spoke?"

"Keith was good, too. He's a smart man. It's too bad he's not back in the governor's chair, instead of the man we've got there now. A darned Democrat who don't know a good man when he sees one. Appointed that fool Porter from Lafayette to go to Washington to represent this state at that agriculturalist meeting, and Porter don't know beans when the bag's opened. He'd think they were potatoes or cherries."

"Nice weather for Boosters' Day, ain't it?" said old Mr. Stevenson weakly. He had been helped to the table by Hewitt. He was getting weaker as the spring advanced, instead of stronger as they had expected.

"I'm about gone, ain't I, Hewie?" he sputtered, when he had stopped sneezing.

"I guess not. You've got twenty years before you yet, grandpa. Perk up! You sit out on the porch this afternoon and you can see the parade form. It's going to start along here."

"Mebbe, mebbe. My soup's too hot, Grace," he whimpered.

Hewitt was loquacious. Even grandfather laughed at his tale of Mr. Smith and the fish-eyed Elk. After dinner he sat on the porch and watched the boys across the street working on the float.

"Get busy here, George Rogers!" they were shouting at a new arrival. "Lot of business you got tearin' your pants and taking time out on such an occasion as this. Got your dinner, too, did n't you?"

The hero of the Revolution grinned, without deigning a reply, and fell to work. Presently he explained that he had n't had much.

"Say, fellows, have you seen the Preston float? It's great."

"No, we did n't tear our pants."

"They'll get the first prize."

"What d' we care? We're having fun, are n't we?" said the tall boy, still working on the roof.

"Sure. You ought to see the florist's float, too." George Rogers Clark was volunteering all this depressing information.

"Say, George Rogers," began the tall boy, as he pushed himself along the roof, "what have you been doing besides getting your clothing repaired?"

"Fess up, boy!" came the chorus.

"I met Mrs. Lombard up on Fourteenth street, and she took me to see the others."

"All right, if Mrs. Lombard did it. Otherwise we would have had to deal with you in our own convincing manner," he was reassured by the roof-maker.

Hewitt stood up and stretched himself, then started out for the store.

People were still thick on the streets, although on Meridian itself the crowd was smaller. He was not busy at the store and sat idle between sales, watching the passersby. Mr. Smith puffed in at two o'clock.

"Anybody called here? I wonder if this parade will get off, even at two-thirty. Half the floats are n't done yet. I wish you'd call Harry Brandon and tell him I said to put the out-of-town bands back of the Alston ones. The Alston men are sore because I sent them to the rear. Call him right away," and out again he went.

The parade was later than two-thirty. At three, when the first float trundled into view down Meridian, preceded by a boy's band playing the state song, the tired spectators, foot-sore and apathetic, again took courage. A shout went up along the line of march.

Hewitt, from a vantage point in the show-window at Smith's, where he sat contentedly on a box and wondered incidentally what Letsky would say if he could see him interested in an Alston Boosters' Day parade, watched float after float rumble by. Scenes from the history of Indiana, including one showing the founding of Alston by an Indian chief, came first. Then came

exhibitions from the various factories and business houses. The bankers' association had a double display on two automobile trucks — banking in 1830 and in 1913. The leading florist rode in an automobile, a canopy of roses over a body banked in carnations and the wheels massed in sweet peas. Smith's "electric" carried a bevy of girls dressed as Civil War belles. It was labelled "Our Grandmothers." Mr. Smith himself drove a gasoline car, posted with banner advertisements of books by Indiana authors.

Bands, playing patriotic airs, were interspersed throughout the length of the procession.

Toward the end several automobiles loaded with the members of the Suffrage League passed. They were carrying yellow parasols and yellow banners bearing mottoes advocating votes for women. In the first one, driving Dr. Trimble's car, sat Mary Young.

Hewitt saw her and trembled.

As she reached a position directly in front of Smith's, she looked up and saw Hewitt on his box in the window. She gave him a wave of her free hand and a radiant smile. He quivered with pleasure and followed her with his eyes until he could no longer see her,— only a blur of yellow banners.

Wonderful Mary Young, with her gaiety and her provoking smile and her remembering! It was as if she had known that Hewitt had been scanning every car for a glimpse of her, and, having found her, would have lost all content in the day if she had failed to look for him in Smith's. She had not failed. Mary

Young was not the kind ever to fail one who put his trust in her sympathy, Hewitt decided.

During the rest of the afternoon he ignored the march of feet of tired but enthusiastic pleasure-seekers, and read. He read Keats. Keats alone, of all poets, could express the sensuous perception of joys, even though all joys were fleeting, as were Hewitt's after Mary Young remembered to wave at him in his inconspicuous position as keeper of the book-store. He was a youth piping on the Grecian urn, and Mary, the maid, was ever young, ever dancing, ever pursued. "What wild ecstasy!"

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

And, happy melodist, unwearied,
Forever piping songs forever new;
More happy love! More happy, happy love!
Forever warm and still to be enjoyed,
Forever panting and forever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead and a parching tongue.

Wonderful, wonderful Mary Young, who could fill him with an emotion that only Keats could express for him! He did not care to see her again soon,—that day nor any day. It was enough that she was on the urn among other beauties, a beautiful figure wrought by Beauty's and Love's own hands, serene, marbled, in the land of Greece.

CHAPTER IX

AN old man with a pack on his back, a very heavy pack, walked from the East. In Greece he became young again and was curious with the curiosity of youth. He made his world beautiful with marble, and thought and spoke. An old man again, he sailed to Rome, and there he became young once more. He organized his world with law into a great state, and fought and was happy with the vigor of fighting youth.

When he was again old, he moved north. For a long time he slept, while his world built a religion with a form and scourged itself, or lavished luxury on itself, and was ascetic or wanton according to its kind. He awoke and built cathedrals to house his thoughts of an omnipotent God, cathedrals that rivalled the temples of Greece, full of the paintings of a renaissance.

A great ocean containing monsters stretched to the west with a sea of fire and ogres at the end of that. But the old man slept and awoke filled with a strange yearning to conquer this deep. He found a shore where gold was plentiful, and he fought again, and seized the gold.

Age crept upon him, when he returned to a land where gold would buy much.

A child stretched itself in a great land to the west,

— the old man in a new form,— a child who strutted and danced and made fine phrases about himself, gay in the splendors of new dress which some one — he was not certain who was the giver — had put upon him. Vivid, strong, colorful, the child played and laughed at age, bubbling with the glorious effervescence that is the charm of childhood.

What matter that the child in its gay apparel, with gold and grapes and woods around him, scampered and ran and laughed at the temples and the cathedrals and the law other young men had made? He wanted to be happy and do deeds and surprise a gasping world with his own new-found prowess.

He will become old. Let us not wish age upon him. He still dances. He is proud of his finery. He is the old man with the pack — the heavy pack — become a child again on a new continent.

CHAPTER X

ONE night early in May Hewitt started out at seven for a walk into the country. The spring night was ravishing. Cool, perfumed, laden with the sense of new life, it made its way into the boy's veins like wine. He walked far out along Eighth Street past the best of Alston's residences to a point where the town dwindled into country. Smooth and almost straight, like a ribbon, the road stretched before him, bordered by clumps of dark shadow that proved to be trees when one approached them.

Light in the east showed Alston, but here was the open road.

Here and there a house with a light peered through the twilight. Sometimes the sound of voices pierced the evening stillness, but, as he walked on, the farms grew larger and the houses farther apart. A tide of loneliness, a joyful tide, as though all the winter he had been waiting for this moment, swept through Hewitt as he breathed in the sweet smell of the soil, of growing things. He walked in tall, wet grass which grew rank along the road. The soft, damp earth gave under his steps, lending a welcome elasticity to his movement.

Some frogs croaked bleakly and gurgled from a

pond in the middle of a field. The lights from an approaching automobile blinded him as it came nearer, and he stood silent, while it whirled past him and was lost in the distance. He looked back again at the town, and the light was even brighter now with the radiance of a nearly full moon rising in the east.

As the moon brightened, it lighted up the mist which was rising from the damp fields. In places this was an impenetrable fog, hiding the lower part of the landscape, but disappearing in the brightening upper air. Out of it might have suddenly come *Puck* or *Peasblossom* or any faery host, unsurprised by and unsurprising to a gray-eyed boy who would have stood firm for talk.

“On such a night.” . . .

What had not happened in other worlds in the long ago on “such a night”?

And yet he was glad that it was his night, that he was walking down a road leading from Alston, alone but surrounded by an invisible life which pulsed and murmured like silence itself.

Mary Young had talked with him that day. Or, perhaps, she had let him talk to her about Keats. Mary remembered the name, she was sure, from her school-days, after Hewitt had spoken for a while about his poetry. He had read her, in such a low tone that no invading customer would know what they were engaged in reading, “The Ode to a Grecian Urn.” She had listened with her eyes half-closed, her chin almost touching his shoulder as she leaned forward.

"Do you like it?" she asked curiously, when he had finished.

"I like it," was his way of saying lamely that it was the most beautiful poem in the world.

"Have you read it many times?"

He did not tell her that he had read it hundreds of times since Boosters' Day, with Mary Young among those happy figures on the urn.

"Do you like all poetry, or only Keats?" she asked, still with the curious light in her eyes. She continued to hold them half-closed as she talked to him.

"Oh, one selects. I like a great deal of poetry."

"You read so much, don't you?" Her tone made this sound like an accusation, and he was quick to resent what another could have said with no such effect, because he would have been contemptuous of an ignorance which did not put a proper value upon his blessed books.

"Not so much," he said. "At least, I did n't used to read so much. I've kept up with my study this winter, because I did n't want to get rusty in — Alston."

"Is there any danger of getting rusty in Alston?"

It had been quite a question and answer affair, he thought now, as he traced his way through the soft, swishing grass and at the same time through the conversation of the afternoon.

"Don't you find it so?" he had asked, with some of the same curiosity he had felt in her voice.

She had paused and examined him again, and then had rippled into a light laugh.

"I read. Does that keep one bright and shining, like a good stew-pan in 'Spotless Town'?"

"What do you read?" he asked, with a hint of hostility. He had rather she did not laugh that way when she was talking to him.

But she had ended the whole conversation by turning away to jest with Mr. Smith in the back of the store, and had not answered his question. He had been sorry for his tone, and blamed himself for her not answering. He had not, he decided now in the moonlight, been entirely courteous. Had there been a hint of whimsicality in her eyes when she turned away? Why had it been there, if, indeed, it had been? Surely she approved of reading persons.

He pushed this doubt of her intellectuality away from him. Had n't she made that remark about brains counting in any place? And had n't she talked of amusing herself with *Harper's* in the way Ernestine Smith would have spoken of entertaining herself with a low-grade popular novel? And she had, on the latter occasion, spoken with the contempt of the person who commonly reads heavier material.

Of course Mary Young was intellectual! She was the one person in Alston on whom he could count for sympathetic understanding. He could not doubt that.

The road ran into a little valley, and a sweep of cooler, water-drenched air blew past his face, chilling

him until a gradual rise in the ground made the air warm again. A stone wall, low and inviting, half-swathed in the mist which continued to rise from the fields, bordered the road at this point. He pulled himself up on it and sat swinging his crossed feet in contented solitude.

He had never in his life felt so consciously alone with God, or whoever it was who dominated this rolling country which seemed to dip down at the horizons to form its sphere — whoever lived in the great expanse of sky with its multitude of stars whispering together. Somewhere in the heights of the sky, behind the blackness of that immensity, was a good God, he felt sure to-night. He was in sympathy with Alstonian Methodist and Presbyterian notions about a personal God of Love — to-night.

He liked to look up at the sky with a dim hope of seeing into it. Vast distances opened up if one looked for a long time, though at last there came a point where minute atoms danced back and forth and blinded one.

The moon traveled higher and higher in the east, flooding the country with its white light.

A low "roadster" was creeping toward him from the west. Its lights were dim, and it turned slowly into a cross-roads fifty yards from where Hewitt sat. He was not intent upon it; his mind was following the changes in his thought and in the night.

He was, however, watching it, and the conviction came suddenly that the girl in the "roadster," sitting

low and with her face turned away toward the man, was Mary Young. Somehow he did not want to think about this. He could not even tell why he was so sure about the truth of his impression. He had never seen the hat before, he felt sure, even in the moonlight. He had been thinking about Mary shortly before, he told himself; that was why he had thought of her when the "roadster" rounded the curve.

But he could not argue himself out of the conviction.

In following the car with his eyes, he perceived that the man's arm was around the girl's shoulder, and that they were leaning toward one another.

A wave of overwhelming jealousy brought a film over Hewitt's eyes. Who was the man? A swift fury tore Hewitt's heart at the thought of this strange man's touching Mary. He slid down from the wall and watched the "roadster" as it slid quietly down the road. Before it disappeared behind a clump of bushes at the roadside, the man leaned closer to the girl. Suddenly the beauty went out of the night. His wonderful, radiant Mary Young! The man and the girl had kissed each other, he felt certain, just before they passed out of sight behind the trees. He shivered as though he were chilled. Why should Mary, whom he had placed on the Grecian urn,—a beautiful maiden without flesh, who would outlast time,—why should she be kissing a man? He wondered who the man was. The incident was earthy, sordid. And it was not like the Mary of his dreams.

Each time he came back to this conclusion, and by the time he had walked back to the city streets again he had convinced himself that it had not been Mary at all. How could he have been sure at fifty yards by moonlight? He called himself a fool and shook off his feeling of having been injured physically.

He sat up late in his room, reading some volumes of poetry he had found at the library. They were new. Mr. Smith never bought new poetry. There were huge volumes of Tennyson and Browning, desultory ones of Keats and Shelley and Byron and Wordsworth, ugly, awkward sets of the nineteenth century American poets, on his shelves, but he scorned recent poetry as a salable article of merchandise.

So Hewitt bathed himself in emotion from a library copy of some verse of the moderns.

In and out through it all walked a sweet, enchanting ghost of Mary Young, clothed in a thousand soul-garments,—tender, swift-footed enemy, friend, mother, responsive lover, cruel, faithless woman,—in and out interminably, until a weary young man with gray eyes and dark hair and thin legs found the print blurring under his eyes and went to bed, where he continued to be haunted by a phantom that rose out of the mists of moon-lit fields and evaded him endlessly, disappearing with a whimsical laugh as he touched the spot where she had been. He dreamed, too, that he and Eleanor Rowe were riding through a dark country in a low "roadster." He was going to kiss her, but

just as he leaned toward her, Mary Young arose out of the bushes by the roadside, laughing a delicious, gurgling laugh that sent the shivers up and down his spine. He woke and pulled the comforter over him. He was shaking with a chill.

Any inclination he might have felt to brood over his night glimpse of some one who might have been Mary Young evaporated in the clear light of the May morning that followed. He cast the whole episode into the sphere of the unbelievable and was cheerful about all his relations with the world. There was a reaction in him to the mood which had led him to take a walk in the country at all, and he became glowingly social. In Hewitt's case this "being social" took the form, of course, of conversations with Mr. Smith, Mrs. Chancellor, and customers, lengthened from the brief business speeches generally indulged in because necessary.

It was impossible for him to be social in the sense that Mary Young, entering into the lives of half the people she met, was social.

He engaged his employer in a conversation on the uselessness of such an institution as the family.

Mr. Smith was a firm believer in that venerable institution. How else could one rear children to their advantage?

Hewitt himself believed in the family. Letsky had given him books to read which proved that when man was emerging from the animal stage and starting to-

ward human society, the family, in primitive agricultural society under the domination of the mother, was a thriving and satisfactory affair.

But for purposes of being social a difference in opinions was desirable; so he objected to the family and gave his reasons. How many children were well-reared? How many children were brought up to witness the harmony which is the concomitant only of intelligent love between the sexes? How many had the advantages — well, even of an orphan asylum, for instance?

Mr. Smith hurried to the rescue of the home. The family was sacred. The Methodist Church sanctioned it. Let it rest!

So Hewitt let the family, Mr. Smith, and himself rest awhile, without maligning the Methodist Church as an intelligent institution, selecting other most highly profitable social institutions.

There were many other subjects in the world well worth discussion. The main trouble in bringing them up before Mr. Smith was that Mr. Smith did not want to discuss them. The world was a pleasant place when one got the things one wanted, and he had done so. He desired money within limits, enough to supply his own and his children's needs — and those of the latter were numerous and expensive, as befits a leisure class whose conspicuous waste is a test of its importance. He had wanted a loving wife and "nice" children, and he had them. His wife's expression of her love was not what some men would have desired, but it satis-

fied him. He wanted her to be social, if she chose. He had wanted to count in Alston, and, indeed, he did count. He was one of the best citizens. What more was there in the world to want?

He had never expressed himself so baldly as this to Hewitt, but the boy understood his position. It is a pleasant position, though it was not Hewitt's. But then, Hewitt's desires were too vague to be written. He did n't know what he wanted, which is a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. Being sure of their desires did n't run in his family,—on his mother's side, at least. You always wanted more than you had, and made some effort to get it, although not always a consistently forceful effort. Sometimes it was a soul you wanted; you did not know for sure what a soul was, and so you never knew whether or not you had achieved possession of it. Sometimes you wanted money. You worked then and schemed, and if you did n't get as much as you wanted without too great a strain of effort, you wanted a philosophical attitude which made money cease to matter. That obtained, you wanted something else. Hewitt had not shown strong signs of this trait up to date, because Letsky and Mr. Woody had been so sure of only one important value—the intellectual—and he had been influenced by their wants.

However, he realized that only unintellectual people were satisfied. They could form no imaginative conception of themselves in a more pleasant or a more dignified position. He had often admired himself for

vague glimpses of what he dubbed rightly or wrongly, a "divine discontent."

"You'll never reach a right conclusion until you have gone through a series of wrong ones," Mr. Woody used to say, to defend more conservative thinkers to Letsky and his coterie.

So this May morning between sales, while he was working in the back of the store, Hewitt wanted to draw wrong conclusions, or almost any kind of conclusions, just so there would be good, hot, spicy argument about sex in novels. He knew that all people who know what a novel is have strong opinions on sex in novels. Hewitt believed in and read, when he had time, all the starred books in the libraries. He did n't think they should be starred. That was the work of the bulk of sensuous, hide-bound, silly people who were so afraid their innocent girl-babes — it was all right for their sons; one could n't know what boys read and did — would find out something about the great secrets of the flesh that they could n't let the subject be mentioned in the household, but allowed the afore-mentioned babes to find out such secrets in the approved way from companions in the worst possible form.

"But spare our daughters!" quoth the sensuous, hide-bound silly people.

According to Hewitt,—

"Don't inflame us!" quoth they, also. "In the face of sex we are helpless, the creatures of a powerful law. Let us avoid mention of sex — in novels. We

can learn of sex in moving-pictures and on the vaudeville stage and in cheap musical comedy, but save us from sex in literature. So sacred do we hold our right to smile at the suggestive, while spurning the real." Hence one of Hewitt's chief joys on his "social" days was to argue about sex. Other people were shocked in the first place, then found him very amusing. He became an enigma to the curious, who could n't tell whether he was really bad, or only a high-brow.

This morning he put out a tentative statement, swallowing his smile. Mr. Smith remained silent, but a scowl showed that he had heard.

Hewitt tried again.

"If people were n't so underhandedly interested in sex as a pastime, they would n't mind having it put into books," he averred with gusto.

"Shut up!" growled Mr. Smith.

"Take most young men, Mr. Smith. They blush and want a fellow to hush up when I mention sex in my way."

"Young fools," was Mr. Smith's reluctant comment. It was out before he could prevent it.

"Sex is more interesting to more people than anything else in the world, is n't it?"

"Shut up!"

"All right. That puts you in Joe Bales's class."

This impudence brought a chuckle, but the scowl followed.

"When do you think the good citizens who won't

allow Dreiser's books on the open shelves will put that good old conservative institution, the red light district, out of commission?"

"Look here, Son. There are a lot of things that you don't understand. You're meddling with fire when you touch a big human proposition like sex. Now go to work and keep still. We haven't settled prostitution yet any place in the world."

"As animals, we did pretty well, but now that we are men —" Hewitt shrugged.

"We're still animals."

"No. Savages have a well-controlled system for sex satisfaction. They're temperate by their own law. We're not."

Mr. Smith regarded him questioningly, his eyebrows still lowering pugnaciously.

"You are wrong. Savages are the worst."

Hewitt could not swallow his smile this time.

"They learned all the vileness they know from civilized men. Scientists have proved that."

"The devil they have!"

"I can prove it to you."

"H'm. All right. Shut up, now."

This "being social" drove Hewitt into other action while he was alone in the store shortly after noon. He took down the telephone receiver with great calmness and called Dr. Trimble's number. By the time he got Mary Young to the telephone, however, some of his social calm, never deep, had left him, and he stuttered ridiculously in telling her who he was.

"Did n't you think I did lovely in the parade?" she asked, with her delicious laugh.

"I should say! But what I want to know is, whether — when I can come down to tell you about Letsky?"

"To-night," Mary stunned him by answering.

"I'll come. Thank you. At eight."

This calling of Mary seems at first glance to have been a spontaneous proceeding acted out on impulse. Further consideration of his action proves it to have been premeditated.

On the first of May Hewitt's account at the bank stood at figures approaching two hundred and fifty dollars. This meant that by September, when he left for Chicago, should he continue to save fourteen dollars out of eighteen, he would possess nearly four hundred and fifty dollars. This mammoth and awe-inspiring sum would insure his residence as a student in Chicago University for three terms, if he were careful of expenditure. He became as near a miser as a bank-book would allow him to be. Rubber-banded, it lay in his pocket. When he felt unusually unimportant in Alston, he opened and read it.

But while on May first the book read two hundred and fifty dollars, on May tenth it read two hundred and twenty, and he had been paid between those dates. Sanely considered, with import observed and digested, these facts point in one direction — reckless extravagance.

On the night when he set out from Fourteenth and

Jackson Streets for Twelfth Street, his appearance proved our deductions correct. He was clad in a blue suit of good cut, which had cost thirty dollars. He wore a silk shirt. Its price had been three dollars and fifty cents. His shoes — unheard-of extravagance — had cost eight dollars. He was the proud wearer of silk socks. A new soft hat, with a jaunty turn to the brim in exact imitation of Kenneth Reed's, completed his costume. Total, forty-five dollars and fifty cents, exclusive of unmentionables.

He felt uncomfortably new, dressed up, expensive. But by slouching just a little, according to old habits half-discarded of late, he felt that his newness was not evident to others. Also, blowing his nose whenever he passed anyone who seemed to be mentally commenting on his appearance kept him from feeling so noticeable at the moment. His handkerchief was quite damp by the time he reached Dr. Trimble's.

CHAPTER XI

HEWITT had evolved, in the course of his travels through this vale, various theories concerning heaven. This night proved them all wrong — for an hour, at least. Heaven was not, as he had supposed in childhood, aided by pictures in a mammoth religious book reposing on the “stand” in the farm-house, a place where one tiptoed around on hard, outlined clouds that should have been feathery but were not; where golden-haired angels (they were never anything but golden-haired, by some inexplicable discrimination against brunettes in the population) played on golden harps, surrounded by babies possessing arms and slight pin-feather wings, but no bodies. Heaven was not summer fields with sunshine and daisies, a dream of his earlier adolescence, when work made one doubt the essential goodness of the godly plan. Heaven was the porch of the old-fashioned, wide-lawned Trimble house on Twelfth Street, Alston, Indiana.

Dr. Jimmy, pulling his long legs reluctantly over the porch floor on his way to save old Mrs. Cantline from a death she had approached and evaded ten times in one month, did not know that he was treading the floor of heaven. He was unconcerned, and spoke to Mrs. Trimble about having a carpenter mend one of the pillars supporting the roof. It was rotting at the base.

He was ignorant of other things, too. He did not know that Mary Young, who was impudent to him as he descended the steps as slowly as though Mrs. Cantline really were dying this time and he did n't care, was the queen of heaven. He thought in the innocence of mature manhood that she was his wife's relative spending a few months with them until Martha and the children went to the lakes for the hot weather.

Mary herself would have been surprised if she had known just how high was the position she occupied above the earth.

Only Hewitt, sitting in the swing with one foot thrown nonchalantly over the other, knew all these things. He also knew that neither Joe Bales nor any of his set could have been more at their ease on any Twelfth Street veranda than he was on the Trimble's. He felt as important as even he could have wished, and unusually facile of speech. He felt keyed up for talk — talk on an elevated plane, different from the talk, violent talk, into which Letsky's and Bowman's and Simeon's conversations often degenerated. This talk was to be combined with cleverness and wisdom, rich in wit, bubbling with brilliance, in short, the talk of the élite.

To begin with, there were obstacles to a free flow of language which Hewitt had not counted on. A group of boys who belonged to the set which danced and motored and played pool and went to Indianapolis with frequency were sitting on Caroline Walker's steps next door to the Trimbles, and they were close enough

so that bits of their conversation floated unsought to where Hewitt and Mary were sitting.

Their presence would not have disturbed Hewitt himself, except that Mary laughed several times at the remarks which penetrated to them.

"What d'you know about Kokomo?" some one said in the tone of the retort discourteous.

"I know something you never learned there! I know when to leave!" This was followed by a roar of laughter.

Hewitt's remarks on the weather and Boosters' Day and other subjects, supposed to be proper preliminaries to the real talk of the evening, were cut into disgustingly by these and other comments. How could one be expected to be brilliant, even though stimulated by clothing which had cost forty-five fifty, when the one to whom you were addressing your brilliancy kept smiling at other people's remarks? Mary must have at last seen that her visitor was becoming piqued by his position as runner-up, and stopped paying attention to drifting fragments from next door. Anyway, the young people over there were dividing up into pairs and strolling off. Two—and from where Hewitt was sitting, he would have said they were Ernestine Smith and Gerald Kahn,—ran out to the Walker car in front of the house and jumped into the back seat.

Hewitt settled himself more comfortably on the swing, now that rivalry was eliminated.

"Let's see. I promised to tell you about Letsky, did n't I?"

"Yes," Mary smiled at him. "But first, have you heard from Kenneth Reed since he left?"

"Not a word. Have you?"

"Just a tiny note from Indianapolis. He's sweet, is n't he?"

Hewitt would n't have gone that far in qualifying Reed's likeableness, but he acquiesced. Mary seemed to expect it of him.

"Do you think he will really go to Harvard, as he expects?"

"I should say. He's set on it."

"How old is he?"

"About — let's see — twenty-three."

"He's sweet," Mary repeated needlessly.

Conversation lapsed. If Mary really wanted to hear about Letsky, it was her place, after having stopped Hewitt's first attempt, to ask for more details. Instead, she sat smiling to herself absent-mindedly.

"What have you been reading?" he asked, when the silence had become painful to him.

"Bright, clever, appallingly light stories in magazines," she said, and deepened her smile.

"Do you like them?" He wanted to hear her disdain them.

"Well, in summer, you see — It is summer, is n't it, Hewitt? It has been almost hot to-day."

Hewitt thought this was self-evident and that an answer was unnecessary, so he remained silent. He observed the stars, the trees, the Walker automobile, and finally Mary's hair, and he liked the last best. In

the dim light from a rising moon it looked pretty, he thought, brought up from her ears in that way, showing tiny black points in the lobes of her ears. He had always hated earrings, because Grace wore small gold ones through holes that were really pierced in her ears. Barbaric. But Mary Young's were different.

"Why don't you come and sit in the swing?" he ventured in a low tone.

"Do you want me to?"

"Of course."

"Then I shall sit in the swing."

He felt better after that. She must like him, or she would n't sit in the swing with him.

"I found a poem in a new book last night that I liked," he said after he became used to having her so near him. "I thought of you when I read it."

"Did you? That was sweet of you."

"Do you want to know what it was about?"

"Do tell me, please!" she pled with him, frightened that he would not,— at least, so her voice sounded.

How beautiful she was when she turned her head half-toward him in that way! Her dress was of some fine, transparent, dark tissue that clung softly to her arms. He felt a desire to touch it.

"It was about a boat on a sea. A man was in it with a girl he — liked. The sea was sparkling with sunlight, and he thought, as they moved out into it, that an after-life must be like that — serene and peaceful and full of — love."

She looked him full in the eyes, but her own were

half-closed in that queerly disturbing way she had, and there was a peculiar, puzzling smile on her lips.

"Why did that make you think of me?" she asked.

"Because"—he paused, and then decided that a lie was safer, "the description of the woman was like you."

"Oh," she said.

"Alston is a very queer town, is n't it?" he mentioned after a while.

"Is it? How?"

"No one reads poetry here."

"Do they in other places?"

"Oh, yes. I think so."

"Perhaps they do here."

"I have n't met anyone, except one school-teacher, who does."

"Well, let's count her," she laughed roguishly.

"She's oldish."

Mary laughed harder than ever, that delicious laugh that made him echo it.

"All right. We won't count her. Only young poetry-readers shall count. But there are a great many people in Alston whom you don't know, are n't there?"

"Ye-e-es," he was unwilling to admit. "But no one buys poetry."

"Perhaps they already have the books."

"They could n't; at least, not *new* poetry."

"Is n't there any other kind?"

He paused and examined her profile intently. Was she arguing with him?

"Oh, there are the classics."

"Perhaps Alston reads the classics."

"Have *you* ever read Tennyson?" he asked. This was in the nature of a test question.

"Every one does," she said, falling short of the standard of Hewitt's ideal of a discriminating reader.

"He's insipidly commonplace," he announced.

She glanced at him again with her half-closed eyes and provoking smile. "You are hard to please." But there was flattery in the accusation. "I suppose every one passes through the stage of liking Tennyson?" she suggested.

"And then outgrows him," he replied.

"Whom do you like?"

Hewitt studied the stars. Whether or not Mary guessed the answer — very personal and provocative of annoyance, perhaps — which almost slipped out, she spoke quickly. "You read so much," she said.

"You said that the other day."

"You must be careful not to let life slip by while you read about life."

He turned his head to look at her, astounded and hurt. She was not an intellectual, to doubt his reading.

"One lives in books," he defended himself.

"Not the same way. Experience is where one lives truly."

"When you read Browning's 'Rabbi Ben Ezra,'

for instance, you mean that you have not lived very — poi-g-nantly?" He pronounced the "g."

"Very what?" Mary asked curiously.

"Poi-g-nantly," he repeated.

"Do you want me to tell you something?" she asked gently.

He nodded.

"You are mispronouncing it."

She instantly regretted her cruelty, for he flushed and winced.

"I'll pronounce it any way I choose," he said angrily, trying to cover his confusion.

"It's better to conform in the matter of pronunciation."

Silence.

A breeze, arising as the moon brightened, stirred the trees and tossed Mary's hair from her forehead.

"Are you very angry with me?" she asked him with a soft intimacy, laying her hand on his for a second.

"I am not angry," he denied.

"Yes, you were. I could feel it in the air. Fiery breath, you know."

He laughed outright.

"Anyway, whether Alston reads poetry or not, it's interested in money, money, money!" he burst out with, when the air had been cleared of the fiery breath.

"Alston is overflowing with Monera."

"What are Monera?"

"They're a low order of animals. They just exist to absorb food."

"And Alston is like that?"

He was sure of it, and said so.

"What makes you think so?"

"Every one wants money; they have n't time for anything else."

"Is Chicago so different?" she questioned.

That nonplussed him.

"There are some intellectuals in Chicago."

"And none in Alston?"

Silence, while he considered this.

"You don't know that Alston would n't be very considerate of — genius, let us say."

He shook his head.

"Alston would be willing to recognize genius after it had made good somewhere else, but Alston would n't understand genius." Then, for fear she might think he thought himself a misunderstood genius, which he didn't — Letsky might have the spark, but he did n't — Hewitt went into an explanation. "Suppose — well, suppose that Keats had been born in Alston?"

Mary was willing to consider Keats in this connection.

"He would have been a respectable doctor, or.—"

"Or?"

"Or a complete failure as a doctor."

"Am I wrong in thinking I vaguely remember that he *was* a failure as a doctor?"

"He was; but he was something vastly greater than the best doctor."

"You rate poets so high?"

"The world rates literature high — the part of the world that counts."

"And which part is that?"

"The part that rates literature high," he smiled.

"Why would n't Keats have become a great poet in Alston?" she wanted to know.

"Because what genius needs is understanding, and Keats had that in nineteenth-century England. Leigh Hunt, for instance, and a hundred others. He did n't get what some young poets nowadays get in this country — a little condescending notice meant to make parlor-pets out of them,—but real understanding. They cherished and fed his genius. England already held up an ideal of great poetry to him. The ideal is in the English air. That is why it will be a long, long time before a great poet will come out of the Middle West. There are not enough in Alston of what some modern essayist calls 'masters-by-proxy.'"

"And they?"

"They foster literature by their intelligent reading and appreciation of it. Keats in Alston—" Hewitt shuddered. "He would have been neither of the things I first said. He would have been a Chatterton."

"I want to be an intellectual," Mary begged.

"I will call you one," he agreed, looking at her, forgetting about the horror of a suicidal Keats and only remembering other things besides Mary's mind.

"But don't damn Alston entirely until you know everyone. Perhaps you will find that a great many

people here are interested in the same things that you are."

"They're not. They don't read good books."

"You may be confounding wisdom and reading."

"That's where one finds wisdom—in books," he asserted.

She shook her head emphatically, entrancingly.

An automobile skidded to a stop in front of the house.

"Mary! Mary Young!" called a woman's voice.

Mary ran out to the car. She came back soon.

"We're going for a ride," she smiled at Hewitt, and went in for her coat and hat.

He did not want to take a ride with these intruders, whoever they were. He wanted to continue to talk intimately with Mary in heaven. This being suddenly thrown out into a cruel world which did n't appreciate the intellectual at all, infuriated him. To Mary, he was willing. But he was disappointed in her for wanting to go.

However, he followed her out to the car and held her arm while she put her foot on the running-board. The young man in front said with emphasis that he wanted her with him. That left Hewitt, when Mary had hesitated for a second and then acceded to his demands, to clamber into the back, where he sat stiff and angry, on the folding seat. Three women, whom Mary introduced as Mrs. Lombard, Mrs. Carl Hawtrey, and Katherine Miller, occupied the wide seat.

"Of course Bob would seize upon Mary," Mrs.

Hawtrey said. "That leaves Mr. Stevenson in the uncomfortable position of entertaining two old ladies and —"

"An old maid," Katherine Miller chimed in. "Let's not be delicate."

"Where to?" called the czarish Bob.

"Indianapolis, Mary?"

Mary shook her head.

"Not to-night. Let's ride out into the country."

"Don't you race, even if you do want to show off our new car," Bob's mother warned him, with a twinkle of her small blinking eyes at the rest of the party.

They chugged along between the car-tracks to the edge of town, where the chauffeur, greatly amused by a story Mary was telling him, turned into a smooth pike and heightened his speed.

Hewitt felt awkward. He had lost all signs of that capacity for wit and brilliancy which had been his for a few happy moments earlier. He could not, think as hard as he could, muster up a single remark that wouldn't have been ridiculously inapropos and flat.

Katherine Miller and Mrs. Hawtrey were talking about a club meeting.

At last, when Hewitt had begun to feel that his silence was no longer bearable, a howling condemnation of dullness, Mary turned in her seat and gave him that quick, intimate smile.

"Don't let Hewitt monopolize the conversation," she said gaily to the others. "He'll tell you how the world was made and what kind of animals you

were before you became ladies. He's frightfully intellectual, you know, and terribly disapproving of small-talk." She whispered the last, and then turned again to Bob Hawtrey. That was the only notice she took of him until they reached home.

He thought, even after these words of Mary's had set everybody laughing and the conversational ball rolling for the moment, that he had never been so uncomfortable in his life. His knees hurt from the position he had put them into. The seat was none too comfortable, and his stiffness of posture made it worse. To try to appear at his ease, he took off his hat and held it carelessly on his lap, but he found his fingers involuntarily fumbling at the brim. He clutched it tightly to put a stop to this nervous movement.

Mrs. Lombard at length tried to persuade him in her gentle way to talk about Chicago. She always went up for a week or two each winter for the theaters. She wanted to go to New York for grand opera next year. She liked Chicago very much, but there were advantages to be had in the way of music in the eastern city. She also wondered if Hewitt remembered the first picture to the right of the entrance of the Art Institute in an exhibition of the previous summer. The son of her cousin had painted it. He was doing very well at illustration work in New York now.

Between her remarks he followed the conversation Mrs. Hawtrey and Katherine Miller were having about the country club.

"Were you at the charity ball last week?" Katherine called to Mary at length.

"No. I went up to Marion for a dance."

"I thought I did n't see you."

And then they went back to the country club.

Hewitt's efforts at following up Mrs. Lombard's leads were failures. It ended in her doing all the talking, until Mrs. Hawtreys came to her rescue and wanted to discuss Maude Adams's new play.

"Not nearly as sweet as her other ones were. I was disappointed. We went clear to Chicago to see her, made the trip purposely for that. It was very disappointing."

"I thought it the most charming one Barrie had done for her."

"Have you read Galsworthy's new novel?" Hewitt asked Katherine Miller, not because he had any desire to know, but because he felt it his duty, as a guest in the Hawtreys car, to speak to her about something.

"No; I never read Galsworthy." Her tone was sharp — sharper, no doubt, than she meant to make it, or else Hewitt was more ready to be abashed. At any rate, he flushed up and remained silent until they pulled up into a village ten miles out, where they stopped while Bob Hawtreys bought boxes of candy in a confectionery store.

By the time they were back again in Alston Hewitt had grown to feel almost chummy with the terrible torture that assailed him since starting. He could not tell why he should be so tortured. He was not awe-

stricken by Mary's friends, but he was very sure that the evening had been spoiled for him.

He climbed stiffly out when they drew up in front of the Trimble house again. He performed the essential courtesies of leave-taking with painful self-consciousness.

"Good-night, everybody!" Mary called, patting Mrs. Hawtrey's hand and waving to the others. "It was sweet of you to take us. Wasn't it a lovely ride?" she turned to Hewitt as they went up the walk.

"I must run home," he said joylessly.

"Must you — right away?" She looked at him with her eyes half-closed, as she always did when she wanted to impress him.

He turned half-away.

"Are n't you even going to say good-night?" she said appealingly.

He took hold of her hand and drew it to his lips. It was cool and soft.

"Good-night," he said softly, without looking at her. He trembled as he moved from her down the walk, and he knew that she was regarding him with a strange, soft smile.

Mary did not immediately turn to enter the house. What was she thinking?

CHAPTER XII

“**T**HERE are three separate castes in Alston,” Hewitt decided the next morning, as he sat on the edge of his bed drawing on his old shoes. “There are the workers, toilers, who don’t count with the others. There are the respectable, public-spirited, good people, who run the churches and obey the social laws and have some ideals which they cling to stubbornly — also an enormous number of prejudices. And there are the society devotees, who set the pace and attempt to distinguish themselves from the lower and harder strata by following out an order of procedure radically expensive and wasteful, impossible of correct imitation by the masses.”

At breakfast, while Grace talked to his father about housecleaning,— a terrible ordeal just over,— Hewitt went on with his thoughts about Alston castes. He was not sure that the Hawtreys and the Lombards belonged to the smartest society, but he had of late been observing others who did belong. In fact, most of Mary’s associates belonged. Mrs. Smith belonged decidedly, with Mr. Smith as a kind of unwilling but accommodating hanger-on. Alston society — and in pursuing the subject further Hewitt decided that society in all cities of similar size throughout the

United States was founded primarily on the same principles — was founded on wealth. Not that many people had accumulated the large sums understood as wealth in other sections of the world, but they had money sufficient to insure a lavish expenditure when the ideals of caste three assumed lavish expenditure necessary.

Wealth was not the only requirement for caste three, by any means, though many people thought it was. You had to have other things — leisure, unused energy, information about certain forms and ways of acting, the key to the code, and certainly the desire to do the same things that others wanted to do. First of all, however, you must have enough money to be able to forget money, at least, publicly. Poverty was too concerned with obtaining the necessities of life to take part in the pleasure of caste three. Culture, in the broad sense, you did not have to have, although if you did possess a wide information about the arts, you acquired prestige thereby. But without money you were still only a hanger-on; you were not an integral part of the caste.

Hewitt remembered that Wilde said in one of his plays that the requirements for society were your ability to amuse, shock, or dine people. The third class, Hewitt recognized, formed this necessary basis of wealth. They furnished the money and the hospitality. Clever people amused these others, and so paid their way, although with the exception of Mary, whom he gave credit for being extraordinarily clever not

only in what she said, for that sometimes would not have stood the test, but in her adroit handling of people, he had found no one in Alston to whom he would give credit for cleverness. There seemed to be no place for it here. He inferred that all those who showed signs of embryonic cleverness either turned their wits to being like other people or went to the larger cities. Cleverness suggested an aloofness, when he considered that in itself, a solitariness of spirit. Hewitt, being at the age which places that mental and verbal skill which we call cleverness on a high plane and worthy of the highest praise, put down a black mark against the town of his residence.

As for shocking your way into Alston society, Hewitt did n't believe it could be done. You must be different from caste one and from caste two, the working class and the "good" class, but you must be exactly like caste three. If caste three believed that playing gaily like children, but with added subtleties, was the thing, you must not be poised and quiet. Shocking your way into caste three, as very estimable, clever people like Wilde might shock their way into London or New York society, he did not believe could be done in Alston. Alstonians were too cautious, too near to caste two, to make that a workable scheme. They liked the different only in a very mild form, and that after it had been vouched for by caste three in New York or other portions of the East; they could not be sure otherwise that it was the correct kind of differentness.

Above all, then, caste three, in Alston, Indiana, was not original in its demands. It was imitative, but not of caste two, as caste two might be of it.

Having thus disposed of the organization of Alston in a pseudo-sociological manner, Hewitt turned his attention to his own actions of the night before. Why had he sat stiff and pained, even though his companions, at least the older women, had tried to draw him out? Why, in short, had he been such a speechless ass? He knew all the words he should have spoken. He had a belief that Mrs. Lombard and Mrs. Hawtrey, and Katherine Miller, too, would have been interested in his penchant for the intellectual, if he could have spoken at his ease. They would have been responsive to his advances and admiring of his acuteness, he felt sure — the next morning. He who so wanted to be important had passed up the best opportunity he had ever had to impress the "best people." He was inwardly furious with himself and was sharp with his grandfather about passing the eggs — fried eggs, golden-centered and crisp around the edges, swathed in brown bacon.

In retrospect he knew not only what he should have said, but the exact manner of saying it. He should have been careless and blithe. Then they would have liked him, though intuitively he understood that impressing the best families was better than having them like you. It was prestige of one kind or another that every one wanted.

Hewitt realized that whether or no Alston knew

much about books and what they stood for, Mary Young's vouching for him as an intellectual had its force. They seemed — all of caste three in Alston — to put so much confidence in Mary Young's valuations. In thinking back over the one remark Mary had made about and half to him when they were riding, he wondered if she had made it with the intention of justifying herself to them. Should they have been wondering why Mary chose to have an engagement with a boy who was only a clerk in Smith's book-store, that would have explained it. His brilliancy changed the aspect of her seeming lack of discrimination in the selection of men with whom she might have engagements.

Above all, caste three valued exclusiveness. To be really worthy of note in caste three, or for that matter in any community, you must do something better than those around you. In Alston the best way to surely distinguish yourself was by your ability to make money, but there were other methods.

So mused Hewitt on his way to work, appraising and misappraising in the manner of the thinker.

An automobile, driven by an old man whom he knew to be the president of a company manufacturing a device for regulating the flow of gas in stoves, passed him. People spoke of this man with admiration. "He began without a cent," they would say, "and look at him now!" This man did not belong to caste three, however.

Farther along on Jackson Street Hewitt passed

Judge McCullough walking to his law-office,— slowly, as though he were no longer robust enough to carry on his business. Alstonians were staunch admirers of the judge. He had been on the Public Service Commission of the state. He was a good man, stern, but kind.

But caste three was not concerned with the judge or with the president of the Gas Regulator Company. Why? Because one must desire admittance to caste three, and then, if one's credentials were good, one was taken in.

Caste three was playing a game, a big game and very important to millions of people in the world — to people who belonged and to those who did not. You had to have leisure and a desire to play. You had to pay to enter, and continue to pay after you were in. You had to play well, up to a standard. And much of your delight in it must be your feeling that a great many other people who wanted to be were n't in the game. Your exclusiveness gave you a thrill. The difficulty of attainment also enhanced the value of your being a player at all. You were careful not to lightly throw away your privilege of playing with the best people — a rare privilege. That would make Mary Young careful not to take up with anyone who would be unworthy of caste three. Which made Hewitt appear to be not so ineligible.

Consequently, despite his torture of the night before and of this morning when the defects of his previous action became vividly unsatisfactory to him, and his

subsequent readiness to place himself against his will in caste one with the mere workers who did not count, before he had been at work in the book-store an hour, surrounded by the comforting usual, Hewitt began to display signs of that distending of the shirt across his chest which he had shown previously. Had he not parleyed with caste three? Turbulent, uneasy he had been, yet he had parleyed.

Indeed, gradually during the day Hewitt forgot how perturbed he had been while a guest in the Hawtrey automobile. He was able to be haughty when Ernestine came in during the afternoon to ask him, in the absence of her father, to tie up a package of books she was sending to Susannah Connors in New York. She was so entirely nice to him after this favor that he wondered if she knew that Mary Young had allowed him to have an engagement with her. The knowledge of the truth, that she did not know, would have added another inch to his shirt distention. Did he not understand caste three? Which was more than caste three did.

Ernestine stood talking to Hewitt for a few minutes about her car. It had been taken to Indianapolis for repairs, and she was getting impatient over the delay.

"I'm helpless without it," she said. "I hate gasoline cars, don't you?"

Hewitt had no preference about automobiles. He had never thought much about the merits of the various kinds, but under the stimulation of her question he

decided rapidly, with great wisdom, no doubt, that each kind had its good points.

In leaving, Ernestine smiled a good-bye to him.

There is an advantage in knowing a snob, young or old, or in thinking some one is a snob. One is so set up when the snob condescends to waste his or her sweetness on one's own desert air, even though one is contemptuous of the snob's original premise that snobbery is not despicable. That is, perhaps, the secret of the fascination snobs often have for other very un-snobbish people. One acquires the benefits of exclusiveness without making an effort,—democracy being one's hobby — to procure it.

Among other important conclusions, exhilarated by his recent experiences and the contemplation of them into drawing conclusions, Hewitt underlined and pigeon-holed one for future use, providing he kept his head enough to use it: One is just as impressive as one thinks oneself, granting, of course, that one has any kind of a mind to begin with. Hewitt's mind was all right, he admitted. Then all he had to do was to consider himself impressive and he would be. It was very simple.

He devoted various odd moments, which ordinarily he would have spent in reading, in examining himself. During the process he lost a part of the cherished shirt distention aroused by Ernestine's notice of him. He found that he was not a pleasant subject for minute examination. In the first place, he was helpless, he decided. He thought about action, but he was in-

capable of acting to any greater advantage because of his thought. Thinking was the end of his existence, instead of a means to acuter existence. He wondered. He must be lacking in that vital necessity called backbone, he decided. He grew quite angry about his lack of backbone.

Then, too, Hewitt had no confidence in himself outside the intellectual relation. "I am not," he was in the habit of saying, and of being proud of saying, "I am not a social person. I am a thinking person, a hermit. I reject the world of things for the world of ideas. So-ho!" He was so in the habit of saying this to himself that he had begun to believe it.

People were becoming very interesting to Hewitt. Even Ernestine was becoming interesting. He would have liked to educate Ernestine. She must have a good mind by inheritance — if she had been fortunate enough to have inherited her father's mind, which Hewitt would have denied hotly before this — but a mind which had been ruined by something which Mrs. Smith believed to be education. She had selected the institution for Ernestine's advanced one year's education.

At this point Hewitt abandoned himself and Ernestine and Mrs. Smith's educational mistakes and caste three. Some new books had come by express, and in unpacking them rather feverishly he found a book on Russia that he had been coveting. He had, indeed, been instrumental in getting it. It was his

theory, recently developed and enthusiastically and endlessly propagated, that the manager of a book-store in a city like Alston — he always called it a city to Mr. Smith, which shows how he was developing a line of attack not needed in Chicago, but very necessary in Alston, a line commonly called "tact" — had immeasurable opportunities for educating his public. Mr. Smith had never felt that the public needed educating; he had been satisfied to sell them what they thought they wanted.

Acting on this theory, Hewitt approached Mr. Smith one day with the suggestion that the fifty-cent editions of the popular novels be moved back.

"People are sure to buy them, anyway," he declared. "There is already a demand for them. And then on those first two tables let's make displays."

"What sort of displays?" Mr. Smith asked, puzzled. He was not combative, only not sure of Hewitt's idea.

"Well, displays of some good books."

"Classics?"

"We might have those," Hewitt answered deliberately. He did not want his employer to think he was too anxious for this change. Mr. Smith was capable of being prejudiced against the move, often accepting the new with no avidity.

"If not classics, then what?" Mr. Smith demanded.

"My idea was to make a display of new books — serious ones, not novels."

"We have n't enough and there's no call for them."

"Order some, and we'll have other orders from those."

That said, Hewitt went about his work. There was no use in appearing to be intent on change. Mr. Smith required time to digest suggestions. One must n't push.

In a few days, four or five at the most, Mr. Smith came back to his desk with his eyebrows very prominent.

"What books do you want to order for that first table?" he growled, not paying the least attention to his clerk, who was, as far as he was concerned in his present mood, mere furniture. At least, he must not think he was anything else.

"I'll have to make a list from the reviews," Hewitt said, with no joy discernible. "And say, Mr. Smith, I don't believe it would be a bad idea to send out some little booklets painted up a little, you know, and attractive, to people around town who might take an interest in such books and tell them that you have a stock of new ones. Tell them you'd like them to come in and look them with their discriminating eyes." He was positively humble about this suggestion.

Mr. Smith's eyebrows became even more prominent.

"You attend to the whole business yourself, and if we lose money, I'll fire you for thinking of it."

That was why a new book on Russia was in the box Hewitt was unpacking.

The same night, however, after he had lingered in

Russia until long after closing time, Hewitt took up again the unpleasant task of examining himself. Mary Young was his reason for resuming it. As he came out of the post-office on his way home, he saw Mary coming down Twelfth Street with a man whom Hewitt had not seen before, but whom he guessed to be Tom Brandon. Joe Bales had always talked a great deal about Tom. Joe admired him. Tom's father had made a lot of money, so Joe said, on a wheel for freight-cars. There was something queer about the wheel, Joe thought, which made it safer than other wheels. Brandon senior had started to manufacture it, but later had sold out to a trust at an immense figure. His son was spending his income and more, people said. Tom had a reputation for drinking and doing other reprehensible things, but although he was the butt of much criticism, which he seldom heard and never minded, from caste two, he was defended and petted by caste three. "He's a peach!" was Joe's way of putting it. Joe was not exactly vital to caste three, since he would not have enough money to make him that until his grandmother died. But he had caste three's point of view. Tom Brandon was the pet of the caste, the kind it wanted to defend and protect, even while it did n't want its daughters to marry him.

As the couple approached Hewitt, he saw a tall, dark-haired, red-faced young man of thirty or more, slim and trim, handsome despite his dissipation. Mary Young was talking vivaciously to him, and he

was so interested and amused that he burst into a laugh that deepened into a roar as Hewitt walked down the post-office steps.

Mary did not see Hewitt. She was too much engrossed with Tom Brandon.

Hewitt's heart behaved in a way it had taken to behaving when he saw Mary. It tumbled over itself two or three times, made a wild slide for his throat, and ended by beating hard and furiously in its proper place. Afterward he grew weak in the knees. His heart had acted in this way enough times for him to become accustomed to it, but he was nevertheless always freshly surprised and was no more able than before to stop his breathless weakness.

The reason this encounter led to further self-examination was that Mary was so vastly more interested in Tom Brandon than she had been in Hewitt the evening before. If her vivacity with Tom was the normal gage of her social self, she had been unobtrusively bored with Hewitt the evening before.

He gasped. Bored with him, Hewitt Stevenson! Any breath he had retained after catching sight of her vanished. But it was not only wounded pride which spoke in him. He was hurt far down in the sacred places of his heart. She was not, after all, so very interested in him, a twenty-one-year-old clerk in Smith's book-store. Why should she be? What did he — the son of a retired farmer who would n't invest his money and whose sole reading was farm journals — what did he have that Mary Young should want?

She could so easily get admiration and attention from other, more congenial sources. What did he, the hermit who lived in books, have in common with Mary Young?

Hewitt writhed uncomfortably inside. There was no distention of his shirt now. He was "poignantly" unhappy. George Bernard Shaw was required to revive his self-respect. In company with that unquestionably great iconoclast he shouldered the waves of ignominy and reached the crest of the swell. He swam with ease through Mary's lack of real interest in him, through his place in caste one (to which he returned whenever depression seized him), through his unimportance as a citizen of Alston, Indiana, into the safe waters of superiority to all trivialities. He himself, as an individual who was n't getting all that he wanted, receded into the distance. His mind belonged to G. B. S., the king of publicists and modern dramatic artists, who shocked caste two of the world, amused scholars, made converts of youth, and disgruntled age.

Hewitt's hurt sacred places sucked new life out of a preface, and fiercely he determined not to be the plaything of his feelings. He was far, far above Alston and all its citizens, a star gazing down on a badly made earth inhabited by silly, money-mad,—Tom Brandon's money probably did make a difference to Mary—trivial animals called men engaged in love and war and business, alternately liking and hating, the slaves of forces which they were too ignorant to

control, the fools of forms they had made themselves.

The next day, when Ernestine brought Mary into the store to get a book she wanted, Hewitt was very dignified and distant. He was pleasant, but firmly the master of his feelings. His heart only tumbled once, instead of the customary three times, and he braced his knees, so that he never knew whether they would have wobbled, because he didn't give them the opportunity to perform thus ignobly.

Mary was surprised when she noticed this calm coldness. She left Ernestine to get the book and came over to him.

"I'm reading to-day," she said to Hewitt, leaning close to where he stood hard against the case. She meant him to know, he understood, that, stimulated by his talk of the night before, she was reading more serious literature than magazine stories, despite its being summer. She wanted to be praised for it, too.

Hewitt did not praise her. He smiled, but she knew, as anyone would have known, that the smile was frigid.

"I'm going to read Henry James," she said, not daunted by the North Pole temperature. Mary was never daunted by frigidity. This made her always the mistress of any situation where that was counted as a factor.

"He's very difficult at times," Hewitt replied. "Mr. Woody, a man in Chicago, always said so. I've never read anything by him."

"Don't you think you would like him?" she said, with a bright smile directly into his eyes.

"I have no feeling about him. I've never read anything by him."

"But you know about him," she insisted.

"I know what Rebecca Harding West, a bright young novelist, says about his earlier style. She speaks of the time before he began to wrap his sentences in the 'invalid shawls of relative clauses.'" Hewitt could not help being interested in the brilliancy of that statement. It had been one of Mr. Woody's favorite quotations. So the temperature rose perceptibly, and they both laughed. That laugh put an end to frigidity.

"Have you seen our new display of books?" he asked with righteous pride.

"Did you select them?" she asked.

He nodded.

"Did you get the booklet?"

"I came to see if they met 'the approval of my discriminating eye,'" she said astutely.

Hewitt blushed. He was very proud of the wording of that booklet. He had written it, selected the type and color-scheme—in fact, he alone was conducting the experiment with serious books. Mary regained ascendancy over his formerly injured feelings by selecting a volume of essays he recommended, in addition to the Henry James that Ernestine had been having Mrs. Chancellor buy for her.

"I intended to come in and buy a book the minute

"I saw the booklet," Mary said. "I shall tell everyone I know to come in and buy a few volumes," she added, with that charming air of intimacy which broke down his last defense.

"Thanks. Mr. Smith says I am responsible for the success of these sales. It's an experiment. I think public taste can be moulded."

"Is that the reason you sent me a booklet?" she accused him.

"No," he denied. "I did it as a personal remembrance."

"You're a dear! Come, Ernestine. You'll never get to your party at this rate. Good-bye, Hewitt."

She left him in a quiver of happiness. She was wonderful, more wonderful than he remembered. Tom Brandon probably read dime novels.

Hewitt called up Mary some time later that week. She was still wonderful, unchanged. She told him that she was going to be at the Pattons' for dinner, and that he might, if he chose, come for her about nine.

Nine fifteen found Hewitt at the door of the Pattons' house on Eighth Street. George Patton, the editor, opened the door and let him in. He was a large man with a habit of raising his eyebrows until they seemed about to enter the domain of his hair, and then dropping them so quickly that you feared they would n't get to the proper place for eyebrows, but would drop to his pink cheeks, which were polished

and smooth like a baby's. You gasped your relief when you found that they did get back safely. He always carried a stick of light, hard wood with a black top, even in the house. People often judged him to be lame by reason of this habit. When he sat down, he leaned his two crossed hands on the top of it and frowned over them, or lifted his eyebrows again. He had a habit of grunting out short, abrupt, witty phrases that surprised you, because for some reason you did n't expect a person with round cheeks and placid eyes to be either abrupt or witty.

Hewitt had never had any respect for Alston's newspapers. He never read them, in fact. He culled news from the Chicago papers. They were more satisfactory. But after seeing Mr. Patton, he grew interested. A man with those eyebrows might some day unexpectedly say something excitedly satirical, and Hewitt hoped, by reading thereafter the editorial page daily, though hurriedly, not to miss it.

Hewitt was personally conducted into a long, large room furnished in heavy upholstered furniture, numerous lamps of various descriptions, a long row of book-cases, a massive table, and other articles he had n't time to take in. Mary Young was seated in a low, deep davenport near the fireplace and backed by the massive table. She smiled at him.

"You remember Mrs. Patton, don't you? And you remember Hewitt Stevenson, Mildred? In a moment he will be telling you, George, just where your political

reasoning is wrong. He's dreadful! He has no respect for the gray hairs of wisdom, absolutely none."

Mr. Patton raised his eyebrows at Hewitt.

"Thank heaven, then, that I have no gray hairs of wisdom!" he said with an effect of having been very abrupt, not with Mary, but with Hewitt.

"Sit down, Hewitt. I'll be ready presently."

With that, Mary turned to continue her conversation with Mrs. Patton. She was defending some one to her.

This left Hewitt to the mercies of the editor, who was using his eyebrows again, this time upon a woolly, roly-poly curly dog lying deep in the rug before the fireplace, as though there were a fire, and appearing to warm himself.

"Woosy-doosy warmin' himself? Nice ole woosy-doosy! Told, is n't it, for nice 'ittle dogs what like fires?" Mr. Patton was saying, as he knelt down with some difficulty, dropping his stick in doing so, and smoothed the rough curls of the dog.

Hewitt had never liked any dog since he had owned one on the farm in his far-distant childhood. He had always been convinced that everybody's viewpoint with regard to dogs was the same as everybody's with regard to babies. You liked your own very, very much; you did n't like anybody else's. Nevertheless you pretended to. Now he stooped down and petted the dog, because it seemed the polite thing to assume some interest in the animal of the man in whose house you were spending a little time while waiting for Mary

Young to get ready to depart. Mr. Patton regained his feet, equilibrium, and eyebrow movement simultaneously. The cur, imported from some remote place where dogs are supposedly smaller and more beautiful than in America, and so not really a cur at all, snapped at Hewitt.

Why Mary did n't pay more attention to him became more puzzling. Was it customary in caste three — the Pattons undeniably belonged to caste three; they were, indeed, the hub about which the caste had its being — to leave a man whom you had induced to enter a house as your escort to the mercies of a host with a sharp manner and a dog? Never able to get away from the helplessness which assailed him whenever he found himself away from his books and the customary, Hewitt found himself getting into exactly the same condition he had blamed himself for being in on the night that the Hawtreys had taken them riding. He now grew angry with himself, but that did not eliminate his stiff weakness or his dumbness.

He called himself names, unpleasant names. He gritted his teeth and tried to think of something besides himself. Were all people like this in a new situation? Or was the system of action peculiar to him? Was he temperamentally bashful, or was he merely afraid of not acting up to his ideal of himself?

He was n't afraid of the Pattons. Far from it. He could meet Mr. Patton, editor of the Alston morning paper, on his own ground, the subject being se-

lected at random, and come off victor in an argument. He was certain that Mrs. Patton, member of clubs and president of the Woman's Council, was nevertheless not his equal in mind. He did not overrate his mind when he said that. He knew this for a fact. He would have bet his two hundred and more dollars on either one of the propositions, the matter to be judged by reliable witnesses with a reputation for brains. He was willing to call Mary an intellectual and to educate her, but these others could not shake his conviction that he was a superior soul to them.

But he could n't talk to Mr. Patton. He tried. He said that they were having an early spring, and Mr. Patton was at the same time abrupt and lengthy on the subject. He tried to introduce politics, upon which he was just beginning, because of arguments with Mr. Smith, to have more and more definite opinions, but his voice sounded weak and faint, and he did not much blame Mr. Patton for not following up a lead from a youth who showed himself so unauthoritative.

When Mary at last arose and expressed her intention of going, Hewitt sighed with relief from the strain of trying to appear intelligent, when every moment he felt less intelligent. He would not have bet his two hundred dollars when he left. He stood up straight and smiled a wan good-bye at Mrs. Patton, and shook hands limply with the editor.

"You must come over some evening with Mary and play bridge," Mrs. Patton said in her cordial way,

a way that made Hewitt feel that she really did want him to come. "Bring him, dear," she said to Mary.

Hewitt thanked her, and did n't mention that he played only one card-game, poker, learned not because he wanted to master it, but because Paul had liked once in a while to have friends in for a game, and Hewitt had wanted to accommodate Paul. He disliked playing cards. No religious scruples, of course hindered him, since he had no religion. He simply hated to keep his mind glued on spots on cards, when he wanted to think.

Out in the crisp air, clear and cool, he felt decidedly better. He ran Mary down the walk to the street, grasping her arm and pushing her along. She had to stop at the end to pant, and they both shook with laughter. Running with Mary was great sport, Hewitt thought.

Mary was all for being jolly as usual, or perhaps jollier, as they went on toward the Trimble's. She made fun of Hewitt's conceit, a favorite subject for the facetious, and of his tongue-tied condition at the Pattons (she had had time in the midst of her defense of some one to notice that, then), and of his new vanity about clothes.

"You've taken to wearing a new tie every time I see you," she said saucily. This was not true, but he was more dressy than of old, when Letsky had made him feel that an undue attention to clothing was a sign of the sunk-in-the-mud sort of proletarianism. He dressed for decoration, to please Mary, although Mary

was not supposed to know this, and in all probability did not know it. "Some day I shall pass you on the street and never recognize you at all. I identify young men by their ties. I always look at them, and then some afternoon when I see a blue tie with orange futurist designs, I say to myself 'That youth I danced with at Ernestine's open-house last night.' Now how can I remember you, if you wear such a variety? In your case I might be able to follow one change, but —"

"Perhaps something in my eyes would say that I knew *you*, and then you would remember — if you could manage just once to look higher than my tie."

"If I looked higher than your tie, you would try to entangle my eyes with your dreadful gray ones, would n't you?"

He was glad of this evidence that she had seen the color of his eyes.

"I should try," he said in a low tone and without looking directly at her. This remark was very near the venturesome, and besides, he said it with feeling.

"Don't ever!" she said just as low, but he understood, without seeing the twinkle in her eyes.

A street light on the corner by the Presbyterian Church was sputtering as they passed, and with a final brave flicker it went out, leaving the street in darkness. All the other street-lights around the city — those that before they had been able to see, — went out, too, and the houses became black.

The night was dark; there were no stars or moon. Hewitt could hardly distinguish curb from street, and

in the first opaqueness which followed the disappearance of light he put his foot carefully before him to find the correct spot to step.

"What do you suppose is the matter?" wailed Mary.

"Probably something is broken at the plant. This is beastly. Here, take hold of my arm! There! Keep hold. You can't see your next step."

"Neither can you," came softly from Mary. The twinkle was still behind her words.

"I can't see, but I can judge."

"Could n't I judge?"

"No. Women are too impulsive. You'd be falling down in two minutes. You'd think you were on the sidewalk and find yourself in the street."

"But Hewitt —"

"Be careful!"

"If you won't be cross about it."

"I did n't mean to be cross. I'm worried."

"What about?"

"About whether I'll get you home without breaking some one's fence."

"Is n't this funny, Hewitt?"

"No."

"You're cross again."

"Worry. Now we're all right!"

They were on a wider street now, with the houses set back and fewer trees, so that a faint glimmer from the sky made the sidewalk discernible by peering closely. Mary sighed with relief.

"Now I suppose you will be pleasant again," she said.

"Perhaps. Why don't those blamed lights come on? Of all towns in the world —"

"Alston's the worst?"

"It would be, if it were n't for —"

"For what?" She leaned forward toward him.

"For Mr. Smith."

Mary's twinkle became audible. Then she stopped suddenly.

"There's not a soul at home! The Trimbles have gone to the country. The maid's coming back to sleep in the house. I have n't the slightest idea about lights!"

"We'll find something. They surely have candles some place."

"But if they have n't?"

"I'll have to go down-town and scrape up a good little coal-oil lamp like grandmother used to use."

The blackness about the Trimble steps was impenetrable. Hewitt grasped Mary's arm tightly and groped for them.

"Did you swear then?" she asked with exaggerated innocence, when Hewitt struck the step with his shin.

"No."

"I dare you!"

"Blame it, keep still! How can a fellow find anything when you keep talking to him and distracting his attention?" But by the time he finished this, he had his hand on the door.

"I forgot," Mary said guiltily at this point; "the key's under the first pillar."

"The devil!" came the expected explosion. Indeed, knowing Mary, we do not doubt that she had forgotten the key's position to achieve this very result.

But the explosion cast no additional light on the porch-floor where Hewitt was kneeling, feeling about for the first pillar. When at last he got the key in his fingers, he felt his way back painfully to the door.

"I'll unlock it," said Mary, and after fumbling for a long time she did succeed in opening it. "Now how can we find a candle, with no light?" she queried, in complaint against a fate that put out one's lights. She had her hand on his arm again, and Hewitt took hold of her fingers. How soft and cool they were! He never would have thought it possible that a woman could have such soft hands.

Hewitt was unable for a while to make any helpful suggestions concerning finding candles without a light, owing to his concern with tremors afflicting his nervous system, although these had nothing to do with candles. He was not afraid of the dark. He was thinking, obsessed with thinking, of that "Kiss me, Hewitt!" heard many months ago in the rear of Smith's store.

"Where do people keep candles, Hewitt?" asked Mary, unaffected by tremors.

Hewitt took himself in hand.

"They might have them in the pantry or the cellar-way."

"I'm sure they would n't."

A pause followed, during which Hewitt's tremors revived.

"Don't you ever use candles on the table?" he asked after a while.

"Oh, yes; at parties. We'll look in the dining-room. Keep hold of my hand, Hewitt,"—as if he had any intention of letting go!—"and perhaps I can get through without killing either of us. If I die, dear, from striking the corner of the stairs or a case-ment, you go down-town and *buy* a candle."

A slow movement followed toward what might in daylight, or under more favorable night conditions, be the dining-room. Mary bumped into a chair.

"Look here, let me go first. I'm not going to have you get hurt hitting things."

"But you don't know anything about this house."

"I was in it once."

"Yes, but you did n't observe the exact position of the furniture. Besides, it has probably been changed since then. Martha's favorite indoor sport is changing the furniture. Yesterday there was a table right where I am now, but— Oh, yes, here it is! Oh, my elbow!"

"Let me hold it, Mary!"

"How would that help?"

"I have a soothing touch."

"You're hurting my hand *now*!"

"Oh, I'm sorry! What under the sun —?"

"Did you hit the table, too?"

"Something. Yes, it's a table."

Silence, and again slow progress.

"What was that?"

"I think I knocked a piece of pottery off the table," Mary mentioned casually.

"O Hewitt!" she added a moment later.

This frightened him.

"Yes."

"This is the dining-room. I felt the draperies in the doorway. Yes, here's a straight chair. And here's the buffet. Heavens! I've knocked down one of Martha's choice pieces of china!"

A great fumbling in drawers came next.

"Here is where the candles might be, but there are n't any. Only silver holders. There are none in this drawer either. *Have n't* you a match, Hewitt?"

Hewitt jumped.

"Never thought of that! One — that's all." He struck it against his shoe. It flared and went out.

"Say it, Hewitt!"

"Maybe I wanted it to go out."

"Why, how could you?"

"Mary!" he said softly, tightening his hold on her hand, "Mary, kiss me!"

It was out! His arm was around her, her face was close to his, her warm lips — But she pushed him away.

"Hewitt, you must n't! I am putting you on your honor. There's not another person in this house. You know it. Please help me find a candle." She

was pleading, and Hewitt, whether in caste one or three, considered himself a gentleman. He drew back, the eagerness dying out of his face. "If you had only been careful of that match!"

"I guess I had better go down-town and buy some candles," he said slowly.

"And leave me here in this black house? Hewitt, how could you?"

"Could n't you go next door and stay?" he asked flatly.

"Hewitt, you're not being cross, are you? Here! Perhaps there are some in here. There are! Three fat ones. Now we will have to go into the kitchen for matches. Where's your hand?" She found it and pressed it. "Now you're not cross, are you? Please!"

"Not very," he said with increasing zest.

"Be a good boy. Now go through this door. Here is the stove. Here's a match. Light a candle. I want one, too. There!" and she smiled with satisfaction as the candle sputtered into a wavering flame that shone on her hair and into her eyes. She stood looking at Hewitt with that provoking smile. "We might find some sandwiches if we looked," she suggested, holding his glance.

"We had better not waste these candles," he said.

"You're not being nice, Hewitt Stevenson! You're being terribly glum. You knew you should n't have tried to kiss me, did n't you?"

He flushed, for he had not expected her to refer

to the episode. He turned with his candle toward the door into the dining-room and held it open for her.

"No sandwiches, old Glummy?" she smiled up into his face, as she passed him with her flickering candle.

He laughed despite himself.

"Let's sit on the porch and save fuel," he suggested.

"You can't go until the maid comes, you know. You're protecting me."

"Don't you think she will come soon?" he asked quickly, in mock alarm.

"You may pray about it on the steps."

"Thanks."

But fortunately or unfortunately, according to your point of view, whatever was wrong with the lighting plant was repaired at this instant, and the electric lamp in the hall flared into rosy light.

"And to think we might have sat calmly in the swing all this time!"

"I would rather have done what we did," Hewitt said in an almost noiseless voice, remembering a culmination of tremors.

"You're being nasty."

"No," he denied.

"What are you being, then?"

He sat on the railing and swung his legs idly to and fro, while Mary watched him from the swing.

"I'm —"

"What?"

"I'm in love."

"Don't be silly! With whom?"

"With you."

"That's being sillier. I'm five or six years older than you."

"That does not matter."

"It should."

"It does n't. You are the most wonderful person in the world."

"In the whole world? Really?"

He nodded seriously, though he knew she was making fun of him. "You are an angel."

"Some people don't think that," she gleamed.

"You're wonderful!" Hewitt repeated, helpless to increase his vocabulary. He sat down in the swing. "Why don't you kiss me, Mary?" he whispered into her ear, his breath warm against her cheek.

"No man ever asks a woman that," she said, and looked down at her hands.

His head swam. Without moving his hands from his knees, he leaned over and kissed her.

"O Hewitt!" she said, with a catch in her breath. "How silly!" she went on angrily. "You are only a child. How dare you?"

He leaned toward her again, but she evaded him, and when he recovered his senses she was sitting under the lamp in the hall with a newspaper in her hands. He watched her from the door and was sorry, weak and sorry, for the frown on her face, her beautiful face.

"Mary!" he called in a low voice.

She pretended not to hear.

"Mary, come out!"

"I'm angry."

"Come out!"

"Will you promise?"

"What?"

"To be a gentleman?"

"I thought I was being a man," he said.

"You're only a child."

"You said that before."

"I repeat it," and she came toward the door.

"Promise?"

"Nothing," he was firm in saying.

"If you try being silly again, you may never come back again to see Mary."

"You don't mean it, though."

"Don't make me prove that I do."

When the maid came up the walk they were talking blithely about books, and Mary was telling Hewitt about Henry James and was superior about it, because he had already confessed that he knew nothing about this author.

"Everyone says 'The Awkward Age' is the best," she told him with unconcealed pride.

"Who is 'everyone'?"

"Don't be cross again, just because I know more than you do about something. I mean the poor Alstonians who never read poetry."

Hewitt was contemptuous.

"I'll wager there are not three people in Alston who have ever read a word of Henry James."

"If I were a betting person," she said demurely, "I would take you up on that. Hello, Tilly," she called to the maid, "I'm so glad you are home. Was n't it terrible when the lights went out? I should have been frightened to death if Mr. Stevenson had n't been here. Put a light in my room, will you, dear?"

Tilly would. She was a slave of Mary's, too.

"Thank you. Now that Tilly has come," she turned to say to Hewitt, when the maid had gone around the house, "you may feel free to leave at any time."

"You're kind."

"Am I not? What are you going to be when you grow up?"

Hewitt ignored the inference that he was not grown up.

"I don't know — yet."

"I suppose you will write?"

He was so afraid that she was making fun of him that he refused to reveal his plans for the future. He felt that he could not have stood her laughing at his intention to become a great poet, or, maybe, a novelist, since the latter would probably pay better and he must support himself. He might be both, he knew.

As he started to leave, she stood up and pulled his head down to her and kissed his forehead. "That is for being a good boy when I asked you to be. Good-

night, dear." His head whirled again, and he backed down the walk so as not to lose sight of her sooner than was necessary.

"Good-night!" she called from the door.

Hewitt had no inclination for bed when he reached home. The house was dark and he went into the kitchen to find something to eat. He had been regretting those sandwiches for half an hour. An apple pie was seized. Its indigestibility did not bother him. He ate a huge piece and drank some milk. Then he tiptoed to his room. He could hear snores from his grandfather's room downstairs. He had always wished that his grandfather would n't snore, but the years did not lessen the intensity of this performance.

The door into Grace's room was open. He could see her lying in the huge bed, by the light of the hall lamp, a large, dim form. Good old Grace! He was ashamed of all the times he had been secretly irritated at her bulk and her lack of subtlety — and her country-ness. Good old Grace!

He closed his door very gently so as not to disturb the others.

There was poetry in Hewitt's soul which called for release. He placed a pile of paper and his pen ready. He attempted a beginning. He would write a poem about a goddess and a mortal. The goddess, in a spirit of jest, had allowed the mortal to kiss her. The mortal must die for it.

"Diana roamed through Grecian woods," he wrote after a period of intense concentration, but there he

stopped. Not for the life of him could he think of a word to rhyme with woods, and he wanted couplets.

"Diana roamed through Grecian woods," he scanned on his fingers.

"Diana roamed the woods of Greece," he changed it to, but found the same difficulty with the final word. *What* rhymed with Greece, besides lease and peace and niece, none of which suited the goddesses who kissed mortals and killed them?

In the end he gave it up, hoping for more brilliant thoughts on the morrow. A huge yawn shook Hewitt. He undressed. He slept.

CHAPTER XIII

THAT kiss given and accepted on the Trimble veranda, though denounced as silly and with a great notice of difference in ages—a matter to be silent about—reverberated through a week of ecstasy. It colored Hewitt's smallest action. It sang at night through the darkness, mingling itself with the May breezes. It whistled its way into one's dreams and changed their tenor. It whispered to one in the daytime. Like the sun, it was the source of all light. Wonderful Mary!

It must be admitted that it had its provoking moments. It convinced Hewitt against his will—he pommelled the idea, kicked it, fought it off, but it returned stronger than ever if possible, its strength increased by opposition—that Mary Young had been in the "roadster" the night he had seen some one on the Eighth Street pike. This should not have disturbed his peace of mind, had he been sensible. Kissing was an innocent pastime much in vogue among Joe Bales' set. Everybody kissed, as it were. It was pleasant to kiss; therefore why not kiss? As long as this argument was applied to oneself, it was a very good one. However, to be of value a kiss must be

one's exclusive property. Once it is a thing to give others, to be free with, it loses in merit.

Mary's kiss to Hewitt — she had n't kissed him, but assuming that she had makes explanations easier — was worth a great deal. It was invaluable, let us say, beyond computation of value. But if Mary had also kissed Tom Brandon, the kiss dropped — no, not to zero from infinity, but close to it. Now assuming that Tom Brandon was not the only man she had kissed, but one of many, then, contrary perhaps to your expectations, the kiss rose halfway up the scale. If a kiss was a kind of unit of exchange, like money, in which you took what you wanted and gave something else,— admiration, attention, or love,— a kiss was not exactly what Hewitt had always thought it to be. But Mary's kisses were worth more, because more people than just Hewitt wanted them.

He supposed, in this mood when kissing played such an enormous part in his thoughts, that half the men in Alston, or in the world for that matter, would have jumped at the chance to kiss Mary. She was irresistible! Then if so many men wanted to kiss her, and you did kiss her, you had an experience that was worth as much as the demand made it worth. The supply in the case of a girl like Mary was certain to be very small in proportion to the demand. You can easily see where this course of reasoning would bring you.

Which was all very beautiful in an argument, but left Hewitt at the same point from which he had

started: he resented Mary's ever having kissed any one else. He cursed in good round terms because he was n't twenty-six or more to her probable twenty-five, or whatever she was. Then he would have loved her many years sooner and been the first to do so. He was sure that in any clime, in any year, at any hour when he had first seen Mary, he would have loved her. Some author, he remembered, was always referring to the chemistry of human beings and to their harmony. There was something in his soul and in Mary's which created this harmony, Hewitt felt. One's chemistry was very much out of harmony with that of most human beings. There were the dull, the loquacious, the self-sufficient, the slow, the imperturbable, the non-reading, the pedantic — with all of these his chemistry was very much out of harmony.

For whole days, when the reverberations from the kiss were in the air, however, Hewitt ignored her possible kissing of Tom Brandon and others, and was blissful. She liked him, Hewitt Stevenson! She was interested in him! She was adorable! Of course, in looking back to the night when the Alston lighting plant had broken down, overwhelming the city with a reign of darkness which nevertheless had rebounded to Hewitt's benefit, he vividly recollected that there had really been more than one kiss. The more reason for happiness. There had been the kiss in the dining-room which failed of culmination, when she had begged him to be a gentleman. There was the real kiss. There was the forehead good-bye kiss, which was not

to be ignored. Altogether, enough to place anyone in a week's paradise, if only one could forget Tom Brandon.

On Thursday of the beautiful week Mary called Hewitt over the telephone. Some of the youngest set, the high-schoolers, wanted her to chaperone a picnic to Glendale. She wanted Hewitt to share the responsibility. Would he?

Hewitt did n't see how he could go on an afternoon picnic, or any other picnic, for that matter, with the Smith store on his hands. But he would see Mr. Smith.

He lingered, like a child about to beg for forbidden fruits, in the vicinity of Mr. Smith. He waited until conditions were favorable. Mr. Smith was just back from lunch, and was engaged with the morning paper which he had not read. He was chuckling over *Roger Bean* in the cartoons. *Roger* was a representative citizen, married, with a plump, small-chinned wife, a chunky baby, named *Woodrow* and called "*Woody*" for short, and a maid, *Golduh*, who was attended in sentimental relations by one *Clarunz*, a policeman. The antics of *Golduh* were a source of daily amusement to Mr. Smith, who chuckled at the first reading, roared at the second, and passed the paper to his friends at the third. *Golduh* was having unusual difficulties with *Clarunz*, and was mispronouncing words and misusing the ones she could pronounce. Mr. Smith shook, rattling his glasses down upon his chest.

"See this?" he called to Hewitt.

"Yes, I read it this morning. Say, Mr. Smith," he said, trying to act as if little hung on the coming decision, using, as it were, the approach indifferent, "some youngsters are having a picnic at Glendale tomorrow."

"All right. I don't mind their using the land so long as they clean it up."

Hewitt laughed.

"Mary Young wants me to help chaperone them. What d'you think? Is there any way?"

"H'h," snorted Mr. Smith, looking at him over the top of his glasses which were again temporarily in place. "Why did n't you ask me earlier?"

"I only found it out this morning."

"Mary Young? H'm." He examined *Roger Bean et al* and burst into another roar. "Dumn it! That man's funny!" Then presently: "What was that? Picnic? What time d'd'je want to go?"

"About three or four."

"All right. All right. Run on now and take this cartoon over to Abe Kahn. I don't want him to miss this one. That dumn *Golduh!*" More chuckles followed.

Alston was the best city in the world, that day and the next. It was a splendid city. In some ways it might even have been said to have advantages over Chicago.

The high-schoolers were gleeful picnickers. They packed the twelve of themselves into two motors and

almost forgot to count in the chaperones, so that Hewitt was in danger of being separated from his wonderful Mary when the youthful ones came after the most essential part of any picnic and suggested that Hewitt could get into one car and Mary into the other. Hewitt refused flatly, and a boy reluctantly consented to be torn from his own "date" in order to accommodate an obdurate Hewitt.

"Did you bring everything — matches, sugar for cocoa, salt, glasses, silver?" demanded Mary, before she would even step into the car and behave the way a proper chaperone should behave.

"Everything."

"Matches?" Mary insisted.

"I have some — this time," said Hewitt, and they were off.

Such speeding! Mary thought it her duty to remonstrate with Harvey Lombard, who was driving the Lombard car. But Harvey was not one to have his freedom curbed by a mere chaperone, even if she was Mary and a friend of his mother's. "Be a sport, Mary. This is a picnic," he assured her.

So what else was there for Mary to do, if she were not to make herself unbearably unpopular — an unheard of position for Mary — but relapse into comfort and amusement, the latter provided by Hewitt, who was in fine spirits and mirthful.

At Glendale fires were built on two hilltops among the beeches. One was to be used for cooking, and the other for an evening camp-fire. The high-schoolers

were more gleeful than ever. The most bashful was gleeful and daring.

Mary and Hewitt left them to watch the fires and went out on the river in a canoe.

"Do you like it?" Mary asked him, as they floated down between green banks.

"Yes," his eyes said.

"I love it," she smiled.

"Is that all,—it?"

"You, too."

That, being invited, was not silly. They laughed about it and cleared the air of any inclination on Hewitt's part toward sentimentality. A splendid breeze blew from the east, too, which put energy into his paddle muscles, thus further doing away with the fluid of sentimentality.

The young ones on the hill halloed to them as the twilight crept over the water, accompanied by a rose- and yellow- and crimson-streaked sky across meadow and hill, and they beached their canoe and ran for food.

Wienerwursts are a bourgeois meat in town, but the best of delicacies in the woods, especially when wrapped in bacon and unintentionally burned to a crisp on one side, while the other remains in a virgin state of rawness, the whole being slipped into a waiting bun. The cocoa boiled over and burned the cook, who thereupon upset half of the thick brown liquid into the camp-fire amid the howls of an indignant assemblage of cocoa-lovers.

"The dickens!" moaned the cook. "You don't seem to care whether I was burned!"

"Suck it!" recommended a doctor's son.

"There's some oil in the car," Harvey told the cook.

"What a splendid fire!" exclaimed Mary.
"Who's responsible?"

The one who had built it carried off Mary's praise with a high hand and dragged a log almost beyond his weight from the far end of the wood.

Hewitt was engaged, meantime, in sharpening the two ends of a green stick upon which to toast two "wieners" at once, with the bacon wrapped neatly around and fastened to the points. He was so skilful that both the meat cylinders were unburned and cooked through, upon which the gleeful high-schoolers of feminine gender surrounded him begging for "wieners." Hewitt decided that they were the nicest persons he had ever met, so natural, gay, and good-natured, primed to enjoy themselves and to help everyone else to enjoy himself. Mary Young finally objected to their monopolizing him.

Hewitt found that being social with the progeny of caste three was very easy. Youth, care-free youth, with fathers and mothers and money to protect it! Youthful fortunates whom a kind fate had placed in families full of the wisdom which protects the child, gives it a happy, disciplined, cheerful existence, trains it to avoid tragedy, to grasp with firm fingers its happiness, provides it with definite aims possible to be carried

out, enables it to see and to seize the good. These fortunates were of the second or third generation of the successful. Their fathers and mothers, or, more likely, their grandfathers and their grandmothers, came into contact with tragedy in the raw, met and conquered it, grew wise. Reared in a small city where plenty of other families with the same ideals of existence, the same interests, the same pursuits, the same desire to lose sight of the depths life may have to offer, they live on the broad, bright surfaces in the sunlight. They talk, eat, sleep, play, ride, smile, and are content, — their lives a welcome anodyne. Or, if by any chance fate plays tricks upon them and upsets the best laid plans of mice and men, they still smile.

Altogether, the picnic at Glendale was a great success. Hewitt had none of the knee tremblings, backbone stiffenings, the tongue-dryings which had accompanied his intercourse with the elders of caste three. And Mary Young was, when you had her to yourself amid surroundings which did not mutilate your self-respect by inducing the bashfulness you would n't admit, still more wonderful. The whole affair made Hewitt feel strong and happy and healthy. He forgot how Alston would have behaved about Keats and genius in general, how it did n't know books, how materialistic it was. He only wanted to remember that a beech-woods by firelight is fairyland, if the queen of fairyland is present in person and awfully nice to a plain interloper from the city streets, and that the

young Alstonians were among the few satisfactory persons he had met in the course of his twenty-one years.

After the remains of the meal had been thrown into the fire and the silver and dishes had been packed in baskets, everyone ran, holding hands to form a chain, down the hill and up a second hill to the other fire, which threw long gleams of light into the darkness of the woods and the flickering bits of burning leaves into the air above. Here everyone continued to be gleeful and sang German songs in which Hewitt joined, and later came popular songs which he did n't know because he was disdainful of popular music. Mary hummed these latter without knowing or caring that Hewitt disapproved of such outbursts of the American composer. She looked very beautiful as she leaned against a beech-trunk, with the firelight playing across her eager face.

A phrase he had read somewhere — Hewitt was always indefinite concerning sources — about the “eager face of one who has lived too fast” flashed into his head as he watched her. Not that Mary bore the marks of fast living in the ordinary sense of those words. It was only that she had the eager expression of one who lived intensely. A phrase which he knew to be Wells' followed: “An immense, tumultuous capacity for living, a tumultuous capacity for life.” Here was the secret of Mary's fascination for people, of her success with the social set in Alston. It would have been the secret of her success with life in New

.

York or London or Paris or Rome or Babylon. Hewitt could see her, when he tried, in any of those places, with a crowd of adorers about her. It was the mark of the artist in her, the artist who expresses himself in living. Wonderful Mary!

At nine they packed themselves and their baskets into the two cars and by the lights of the motors, wound a slow, devious way down the steep hill, across a narrow bridge, through another beech-woods, and out into the open road. The high-schoolers passed from glee to hilarity. Mary made Hewitt get into the other car to insure safe passage home, because something might happen, if they did n't make sure that nothing could. He went reluctantly. Afterward, although the change deprived him of half an hour of Mary, he stopped minding because the girls were flatteringly attentive and the boys were funny. There was more singing and an astonishing amount of wit. Everybody was witty, with the wit of nonsense. Hewitt held Harry Caylor down with an iron hand and forbade racing, though his commands disgruntled the males.

They arrived in Alston, the whole fourteen occupants of the two motors, with no bones broken, no punctured tires, and a prevalent satisfaction with picnics that found its only exceptions in Harvey Lombard and Harry Caylor, who agreed that a little speeding would not have hurt anyone and would have added to *their* enjoyment immensely.

Mary saw everyone safe home and then was herself taken home. Chicago stock dropped to ninety.

There was a light in the kitchen when Hewitt reached home, and also in his grandfather's room. Grace tiptoed in when she heard him close the door and cautioned him to be quiet.

"Grandpa's awfully bad," she said in a troubled voice.

"What's the matter?"

"He's been bad all afternoon. The doctor says he can't last. He's too old now to get over anything."

Hewitt did not express his sorrow, but he *was* sorry. He stood with his hat in his hand at the foot of the stairs, while Grace tiptoed back to the kitchen. He could hear his father moving back and forth from the dining-room into his grandfather's room, talking to some one, evidently the doctor. Grace went in, and there was more talking in the same hushed tones.

Hewitt laid his hat down and went in. His grandfather was propped up in bed. His face and neck were so thin that Hewitt was startled. His eyes looked glassy and unseeing. The doctor was standing with a thermometer in his hand, while Grace and Mr. Stevenson looked on with frowns on their faces.

The scene was much like a picture Hewitt had often seen on the wall of doctors' offices, showing a sick woman, or a sick baby,—he could n't remember which,—and a man with a pained expression almost but not quite concealed by a bushy beard. Or was it the doctor who had the beard? Anyway, this scene of his sick old grandfather reminded Hewitt of the picture.

After a while the doctor sat down by the bedside, and Mr. Stevenson seated himself nearby, with his hands laid on his knees and his lips tightly closed. Hewitt stood watching, not knowing what to do.

Grace, in passing him to go back to the kitchen, where she seemed to be doing something with hot water, motioned Hewitt to follow her.

"You go to bed, Hewie," she said in the same hushed tone. "You can't help a bit, and he don't know anybody. You get your sleep."

"Why don't *you* go to bed, Grace? I'll stay up and watch."

Grace threw him a look which under other circumstances would have been contemptuous, but was now a combination of disbelief in his abilities as a nurse and a motherly sympathy with this disability.

"You can't do a thing. Go to bed. If anything bad happens, we'll call you, though there's no use even in that. Father won't move out of that room, and you can't do anything."

His uselessness was plainly apparent. He did not seem to count much as a factor in family trouble. Picking up his hat mechanically, Hewitt followed Grace's example of tiptoeing and went upstairs. He left the door of his room open, because that seemed to connect him with events downstairs and to work against the feeling that it was not quite right for him to go to bed, despite Grace's instructions.

He undressed slowly. The picture of the room where his grandfather lay propped against the pillows,

the table with the lamp, the doctor sitting thoughtfully watching the patient, his father and Grace, kept rising in his mind. He remembered the night his mother had died, though it had been a long time since he had thought of it. Why was it that people so often died in the night? Were we nearer the spirit of the universe then?

Hewitt remembered how his father had brought him into the room where his mother lay, looking so thin that he was half-frightened of her, the skin drawn tight over her high cheek-bones and a bright light in her gray eyes. He had timidly taken hold of her hand and had been startled by its coldness. What he had been afraid of was not his mother, but a strange something which had become a part of her. He remembered most vividly her wan smile as she had said faintly to him, "Be a good boy, Hewie, and mind Grace."

A lump swelled in Hewitt's throat. He had never missed his mother very much. Paul and Chicago and school had filled the new life he had entered from the farm. Now he felt a sudden sympathy for Grace and his father, who had endured seeing the place formerly filled by her untenanted and empty.

Hewitt got into bed and pulled up the sheet. How horrible old age was,—when your mind wandered to the past and stopped having a present, when your teeth fell out and you had to eat soft things, and when your bones creaked and refused to hold up the slouching flesh that once had been firm and hard! Hewitt

never wanted to grow old. Youth, glorious youth, with its joys and sorrows and dreams and aliveness for him! He had always wanted to get into a position where he could tell that Belgian, Maeterlinck, authoritatively that his theory was wrong,—the theory that an old man sitting by his lamp and thinking realizes more from life than the active doer.

Why, even his father did not live very intensely, Hewitt thought.

Old age was horrible! His grandfather had not really been living for many years. When they lived on the farm, he had not been anything but an old man moving from one warm spot to another, except in summer, when it was from one cool spot to another, from the shade of the back-porch by the well to that of the catalpa tree, and at last out by the spring-house under the fir-hedge. He had petted the cat and the dog, whittled hickory sticks into hundreds of walking sticks, had eaten and slept.

Hewitt, in bed with the sheet under his chin, hoped he never would grow old, and if he did, as he probably would, that he would die before he had turned into an automaton moved by nothing except a strange desire to go on being an automaton and not to disintegrate into the dust from which it took its being.

Now, downstairs, his grandfather did not want to die. He clung to life determinedly. Hewitt remembered that once on the farm the old man had been very ill and had broken out quite suddenly with a feeble, "By Gad, if I could get up, I'd get me some oranges!"

Later, when Mr. Stevenson wanted to have the Methodist minister come in from the dining-room to talk with him, he burst out with weak fierceness, "Lord, what do I want with a damned preacher?" Hewitt had never cherished these memories of his grandfather with any fondness. "The old sinner!" he had once called him to his mother, in the days when he was taken regularly to church by the family and absorbed the Methodist version of Christianity with avidity — with as much avidity, indeed, as later he took up the views of scientists who made a new god with qualities in common with the God of the Old and New Testaments, but different in many particulars, an impersonal god who acted through laws he had created.

Whereas, according to all his theories of intolerance, Hewitt should have sympathized with his grandfather's pronounced atheistical tendencies, he nevertheless resented having him for a grandfather. It wasn't respectable. Hewitt theoretically hated the respectable, but practically, if he had been selecting his family, he would have chosen one which walked the straight and narrow path of the usual. Youth could doubt; but old age should have outgrown doubt. He preferred his father's narrow-minded Methodism. At this point he dropped asleep, with the thought of his grandfather set aside by the memory of the high-schoolers and Mary singing on the hill. Youth was so beautiful. Why should n't one always keep the joys of youth?

Hewitt awoke with a start. The sun, only dimmed by its passage through the white blind, was shining on

his bed. He jumped up guiltily. His grandfather must be all right or they would have called him. He dressed hurriedly and went downstairs. His father and Grace were sitting over coffee and toast at the kitchen table.

"Come on in to breakfast," Grace said in a voice which was only different from her usual one by its softness. "Grandpa died this morning about four."

Mr. Stevenson sat silently crunching his toast, and Hewitt was reminded of the morning after his mother died five, no, six years ago.

"Did he suffer much?" Hewitt asked, because he felt that he must say something to show that he felt sorry. He said this in a low voice and glanced involuntarily at his grandfather's closed door.

"He moaned all the time, but the doctor said he did n't suffer as much as we thought he did. Eat some breakfast, Hewie. There's no use making yourself sick."

"I remember once, when I was a little boy, my mother made me a pair of trousers out of his," Mr. Stevenson began, without looking at his children. "I smoked a corn-silk cigarette and had to try to put it out quick, so mother would n't see it. It burned a big hole in my pocket, and mother was goin' to whip me, but father would n't let her. He said I'd live and learn without much Methodist punishment."

There was no sadness in Mr. Stevenson's voice. He was merely rehearsing facts so long past that they had lost all power to arouse joy or sorrow in him.

"Another time mother had all of us boys lined up ready — all six of us, all dead now, except your uncle Jim out in Colorado and me — she had us all lined up ready for Sunday school. Father was whittling canes. He was always whittling canes. He's made enough hickory canes in his life to give one to every man in Alston. He sat there whittling and smiling. Then when mother had us all ready, he stood up kind o' slow and looked us all over careful. 'You look perty good, boys,' he said. 'Let's go fishin'.' I'll never forget how mother looked as she stood there. She just blazed. 'Maybe you think, because you're a heathen, your children are going to be heathen, too, Mr. Stevenson! But they are not!' And we all went to Sunday school. Father never went. He said that God had played him too many dirty tricks for him to believe in Him. I used to wonder what they were. He's never told to this day. You could n't get him inside a church." He drank some coffee. "I wonder if he's sorry now," he added.

Presently he arose.

"Maybe he and Matilda are talking over things now," he said. "Matilda" was Hewitt's mother. He then stood looking solemnly out of the back door at the spring sunshine, his hands in his pockets. "Matilda was the only one who could do anything with him when he used to have spells — moods. He liked her. I suppose you'd better call up the Odd Fellows, Hewitt. He never went to the meetings, but

he belonged." He walked out into the yard, and they could see him nipping off ends of grapevine with his knife.

Afterward Hewitt went to work, because Grace insisted that he should.

"There's not a bit of sense in your staying around here wasting time," she said. "Father will be here all day. I'm going to lie down after awhile and get some rest. I've already sent a telegram to your Uncle Jim. He can't get here for the funeral. He has n't paid much attention to your grandfather for years, anyway. Never gave a dollar toward taking care of him. That's his affair, of course. We did n't need his help. You go to work, Hewie."

Hewitt demurred, but went. "Be a good boy and mind Grace," came back to him in his mother's words. And in this case he wanted to get back to the store where life was going on without pause, although an old man had passed out of it.

During the funeral ceremony in the stiff parlor seldom used for anything except ceremonies, Hewitt held Grace's arm protectingly, but she was calmer than he was. He felt ashamed of his tears, but they welled up in his eyes and wet his cheeks. His father sat with set lips and vacant eyes, and Hewitt guessed that his mind was on those far-off days when he had been a little boy half-pleased and half-distressed over his father's actions, especially those concerning the rearing of the children — an old man who did n't believe in God because He had played him too many dirty

tricks, never realizing that he was accusing a *being* by his very expression.

The carriages full of Methodists and Odd Fellows, whom the old man had never known in his days of living, drove into the clean, neat, wooded cemetery along smooth winding roads, among all the varieties of small or pretentious headstones with which the living commemorate the dead.

When the services were over, Hewitt told Grace and his father that he would walk home later. Some impulse made him want to remain. He wandered through the thick grass, past the green mounds surmounted by their monuments, under the yews, willows, and maples, into the older part of the cemetery. There, where a clear brook made a winding way, with little movement discernible, over the smooth white-and-brown pebbles, he sat down on the bank under a maple and thought.

Hewitt always thought where other boys of twenty-one acted.

For a while he was so concerned with the slight evidences of current in the stream that he could not think about what he had intended to think about — souls. The water was so clear that he could see the grains of sand moving forward ever so gradually. Some yellow leaves, the fine, thin leaves of a willow farther upstream, floated past in leisurely procession, a stately squadron.

His mother and his grandfather — where were they? In some place outside the sunlight of the May after-

noon? He hoped that the place where they were was bright. He hated dullness and mistiness. The heaven of the spiritualists—at least Letsky's version of it—filled Hewitt with horror. He did n't want his mother to be a misty ghost in misty air, invisible to humans. He wanted her to be in some pleasant, sunny place like this. The graves did not detract from the brightness; they only added serenity to it. They quieted what in other parts of the out-of-doors might be the over-brightness of May. In a brilliant blue sky floated white cumulous clouds, fluffy at the top and straight and sturdy across the bottom. They, too, reminded him of ships at sea. It would be very pleasant to think that his mother *was* in a heaven above the clouds, as he had thought in his younger days.

He fell to wondering about souls.

Perhaps his grandfather was really done for, as the Old Testament said, "dust returned to dust." If his mind were something made by a queer mixture of chemicals which no one understood, then probably he *was* done for. If that were all, a gay life and a short one, youth said.

Hewitt did not want to be a materialist. There must be something beyond, although wanting something beyond often struck him as being a gross injustice to a God who had given men an earth on which to take their chances at happiness. The unsatisfactory thing about the earth was that so few people procured, despite unrelenting efforts, their happiness there. Some did n't know how to procure it; some snatched

and missed; some took it and then lost it; some got only a little piece of it.

What was soul? Was it a sense of the beautiful, the recognition of the spiritual, man's atom of the infinite, a product of mind that existed only when one wanted it to exist? He had been in the habit of accusing all except the few with a lack of soul. What he meant by that, he decided, attempting to reduce his impulsive generalities to their elements, was that all except the few lacked a perception of the values of living, and of beauty as a factor in those values. They lacked personality, color.

Mary Young had such a beautiful soul! He was not so sure about his grandfather's. Youth cannot judge of age; it is too hidden in the crust deposited by the years. But there must be a heaven where souls would meet and understand each other. It would only be in such a place that he and Mary Young would love each other, not emotionally, unless emotion became rarefied there, but with complete understanding. All souls would understand, with the curtains of the flesh rent asunder. The pure democracy!

Hewitt felt, when he was away from Mary, that layer upon layer of things he could not understand, but vaguely apprehended, lay between his soul and hers. There had been instants when she was opaque to him, when no gleam of a soul he could understand shone through. She never seemed to see caste three in its artificial relations to the rest of the world, but only to value it highly as a sphere. She talked about democ-

racy to him. *She* was democratic, she said with pride, meaning that she was not limited by the lines set by caste three. But she was n't democratic.

Well, if there were only this world, caste three might be wise to set such store upon this one.

Hewitt decided to go back to the store. He would n't work, but he would talk to Mr. Smith and regain a sense of reality he found he often lost now when he was away from people for any length of time. He, the hermit!

The business streets of Alston were crowded. Hewitt felt relief in being again in the midst of business which may pause, but never stops. Living, living, living! That is death's best challenger. Death can take one, but life goes on. To what inexplicable ultimate conclusion? The black angel takes his quota, but the world wags on.

There was a hum of activity in the book-store. Mr. Smith and Mrs. Chancellor were both busy, and they had called in the errand-boy to help. Mr. Smith caught sight of Hewitt and motioned for him.

"Mary Young called up a while ago. She wants you to telephone her. Yes, we're busy, but we can manage. We have n't reached the point yet in Smith's where we can't pay some honor to the dead." He patted Hewitt's shoulder in gruff kindliness.

Death, even when it is your grandfather's, whose age has found no message for your youth, does leave a sting and a depression. Hewitt was glad to hear Mary's voice.

"I was just getting ready to run out to play golf with the Millers, but you come down. I want to see you."

She was dressed in a sheer white dress of lace, filmy lace that showed just the suggestion of her warm neck and arms through its meshes. She took Hewitt's hand.

"I'm so sorry. Sit down here with me and talk."

"I thought you were going to—play golf?" he stuttered, touched by her sympathy.

"I was, but I'm going to talk to you now."

"That's not fair. I can't have you being kind to me when it spoils your fun."

"I've changed my golf clothes; so don't say anything more about my going. I'm dressed up. Can't you see that? I dressed up for you."

She looked at him with half-closed eyes and the provoking smile. He knew that she wanted to be thanked for being nice to him. And he was in a mood not to be too critical of the desire in her for thanks. He had been—he might as well admit it now—just a little bored with thinking about the soul. No one could come to a conclusion about such things; one only changed conclusions. Here it was cheerful and lovely; death could not penetrate here, he felt sure. There was some conspiracy against thoughts of death in caste three. Hewitt was so extravagantly and frankly worshipful in this mood that Mary enjoyed herself.

She let him talk about books a little; but mostly they talked about themselves, and most of all about Mary. Hewitt tried to explain to her how she was different from all the others in Alston, and Mary was as interested as people are when they are told admiringly that they have succeeded in their attempts to distinguish themselves from the commonplace.

"I must n't let you stay too late, because I am going to Indianapolis for dinner," she told him at length.

The ancient fury of jealousy blinded Hewitt, but he fought with it until the only indications that it had been there were two mottled red spots under and around his eyes. He tried to remember that he had had almost two hours of her, that she had been sweet and thoughtful on the day he needed her, but the thought of her motoring to Indianapolis with Tom Brandon—he felt certain that the man was Tom Brandon, although Mary had never uttered his name to him—filled him with a hot disregard for all other facts. The jealousy flared after all.

"Why do you go to Indianapolis?" he asked abruptly.

"I like to go. I enjoy riding. Don't you want me to be happy?"

"Of course I do. I want you to be happy."

But there was no satisfaction in his voice. He wound his fingers in and out and would n't look at her.

"Going to Indianapolis makes me happy. Then are n't you glad to have me go?"

He shook his head.

"I can't bear having you go with Tom Brandon," he said quickly.

"With whom?"

"With Tom Brandon." He did not want to repeat it, but he had to.

A hard look came into Mary's usually gentle eyes, and she spoke sharply.

"You can't know that I'm going with Tom Brandon, so please don't talk about him."

He winced visibly and reached for his hat.

"I don't want to keep you," he said, and tried to make his voice pleasantly indifferent.

"You are n't keeping me. Sit down, Hewitt!" she commanded, with her old smile. "Don't be silly."

"I always seem to be silly, in your estimation," he said, with a touch of bitterness.

"You *are* being silly to-day. You're jealous. There's no use being jealous, dear. I like you awfully, but you're only a child. And I have to be happy!"

The last was a cry not for him, but for life. Mary was saying this almost defiantly, to something outside of him and of her. Hewitt's jealousy died a quick and shamed death. He sat down and gazed at her.

"I know," he said, just as though he did. "I'm sorry I acted that way. I'm a brute. I understand better than you think, even if I am a youngster to you. I love you, Mary." There was an unexpected eloquence in his voice. "I do want you to be happy.

I'd do anything in the world to make you happy. If I bother you, send me away."

"You don't bother me. You help me. I like you awfully. I sometimes think you really do understand, in a way most men don't." She was intimately appealing. "Some time I want you to do something big. Don't drivell. Be a man! Now you must run home. I have to dress for dinner."

Hewitt got up with a feeling of finding his head in a different place from where he expected to find it. He smiled dimly and went out the door without looking back — that is, he intended not to look back, but Mary's voice, gaily determined to be forgetful of all that she had been saying, broke in.

"We have both been silly this time. Let's forget it and just be happy. Be a good boy. Laugh at everything. Good-bye."

She had pulled a mask off and on again, and while she had sat barefaced, he had seen Mary crying out for something which life had n't given and might never give her. He was n't sure what that something was. But the mask was on again, and she would probably so regret having pulled it off, if only for an instant, that she would be all the gayer that night — for Tom Brandon.

The subdued feeling which had been his all day, because of death, was still upon Hewitt. A Sunday quiet was in the air for him. Some children were riding a pony down the Trimble driveway as he went out. Some others were roller-skating down the walk, happily

unaware of any unsatisfactoriness in life. Perhaps life was kind to them because they demanded so little. Here was material for a philosophy.

What puppets we are, even caste three, the seemingly impregnable. Are we ever rid of a sense of our puppetry? Or is it only the Hewitts who are cursed, or only youth which is cursed, with the remembrance of it?

CHAPTER XIV

PEOPLE have attempted to dispense with the law of rhythm at various times in the history of the individual and of the race. But law is law, and attempts to set aside natural law have seldom proved successful. In the workings of the emotions the law is so clear that he who runs may read, because the emotions are complex reactions difficult to analyze, but clear of expression. Take the law of rhythm, for example. There is no ecstasy without an accompanying depression, no rise without a fall. If love is very, very good to you to-day, to-morrow it will be very, very distasteful — or next week or next month. You can't evade this law, except by staying safely and comfortably out of love, and then fate laughs and sends you pell-mell into some other law concerned with other emotions.

Hewitt's beautiful week came to an end. It did not end until after he had composed his first love letter, but it did end. With some relief he reached Smith's store the morning after his grandfather's funeral. He had been weltering in emotion, and satiety was regrettable. Another law. The mind loves a level, just as it loves to desert the level and then to return to it.

He was business-like and pleasant. He wanted to

eliminate the personal element from his affairs and adjust the flood of impressions that had rushed in upon him without giving him time to masticate, digest, and assimilate them properly. Unpacking magazines was fun. One was dealing with paper, which is paper and nothing else that one cares to wonder about. If he had not been so determinedly business-like, he would have been annoyed when Mrs. Chancellor came back to help him. He wanted to be alone with things. He wanted to adjust his new experiences until they became a part of him. So it is with the egotist.

When the magazines were arranged in neat piles, with the unpopular high-brow and mechanical journals at one end, Hewitt set to work to clear the stationery display from one window. Mr. Smith had told him to put in office-supplies when he had time. By ninety-three, with the aid of the errand boy, he had the window filled with an office-desk, lights, paper, filing cabinets, and an adding-machine. By using pasteboard sets of human figures, sent out by the adding-machine company, the whole assumed a semblance of reality, with a man at the desk and a girl at the machine. Hewitt walked out to the street to take toll of his work. The survey pleased him.

Mr. Smith stopped as he came in.

"What's the matter with putting a dictionary at the side of the desk there?" he asked.

"Had n't thought of it. I'll put it in. How does it all look?"

"Pretty good. I thought for a minute that it was

a real girl. Coming down the street, it looks natural as life. That adding-machine manufacturing concern puts out good ads, does n't it? Good stuff." Then he was gruffer than usual in his "good-morning" to Mrs. Chancellor, by which Hewitt understood that he really was admiring the window. "Might change that other window some day," he called from his desk. "I'll give you a free hand with that one. You can put what you like in it, and we'll see what happens. Just so you don't have us all in jail."

Under this stimulus Hewitt hatched plans for making cards to advertise the new books Mr. Smith had allowed him to order. "I'll sell every one of those or bust," was his inner decision.

"Come here, Hewitt; I want you to write a letter for me," Mr. Smith called to him. "And say," he added in a confidential tone, "you can write this one yourself from what I tell you. My writing is pretty hard to make out, I guess."

By eleven Hewitt's concern with "things" had become less intense. The law of rhythm was working.

He began to think about Mary. Mary had gone to Indianapolis to dinner with Tom Brandon. While he mechanically sold pens, pencils, and typewriting-paper to a boy from Preston's, Hewitt followed Mary in Tom's roadster over twilit roads to the city. Then they went to a hotel for dinner. Mary would be entirely at home in the atmosphere of the dining urbanites. The noise and color and music, combined with the idea that this was the proper thing to stimulate the

best people, *would* stimulate her. She would be amused in a way in which she could never be amused by the companionship of Hewitt, who lacked the prestige to create excitement. Mary loved excitement. He wondered if that was what she meant by happiness. She demanded people with prestige and money to obtain happiness. After that, what? Hewitt wondered.

Long, long ago, before he had met Mary, Hewitt had a dim ideal of a woman, formulated in Chicago where he came in contact with few women. This woman out of the mist of the ideal had been a sensible person, interested in a home and children and a garden, a "homey" sort of person devoted to one man. They — the woman and the man — sat on the veranda or in the garden, which was, by the way, full of old-fashioned holly-hocks and larkspur and bachelor buttons and daisies and forget-me-nots and roses, talking about their day and their children. A very sentimental affair, especially when they began to talk about their love for one another!

But Hewitt had been very fond of that woman. She had worn dresses of plain linen, or even gingham, with snowy collars and cuffs and low-heeled shoes. Her hair was wavy and worn low on her slender column of a neck. It was of gold. A very simple, beautiful, lovable woman.

Since Mary Young had come into his life, Hewitt had almost forgotten the other. Now she came back into his mind as he wrapped up the office-supplies for the boy from Preston's and made a record of the

charge on the books dealing with the wholesale part of the Smith trade. This woman of former dreams did not find many people necessary to her existence. She was content with the few; her happiness was within her family. She and Mary would have had nothing in common. Mary married? Hewitt could not imagine it. She was meant to suck the honey from a thousand flowers, to fly through the sunshine from field to field under a May sky flecked with soft clouds. Hers was the sweetness drawn from a thousand sources. She was meant to be loved by a hundred men. The world was dull, unless she was of your part of it. Color followed her. Lesser lights came into play when she was absent, just as the moon and stars signal to one another when the sun has gone, but they were not the right lights. Mary was the sun. People knew that she was. Ernestine Smith never went to a party unless Mary was going to be there. Katherine Miller was guided in all the details of her daily living by Mary. Tom Brandon's sister refused to be made happy unless Mary stayed with her at least a fourth of the time. Abe Kahn's children had attached her to their household years before, and fought off all more youthful acquaintances when they could have Mary. Hewitt wondered if anyone ever played bridge in Alston without Mary.

Wonderful Mary! She seemed to give all of herself to anyone she singled out as worthy of any part of her. If you were important to Mary, she saw to it that you became important to the world. She de-

rided you, jested with you, pointed out your defects — to you —, but to the world you were all wool and a yard wide.

Hewitt sold a cheap story-magazine to a traveling salesman and wondered how a man could endure wasting his time over it. People, it seemed to him, actually ran away from wisdom and courted vapidty. Such is the intolerance of youth.

It was not until late afternoon that the reaction from the emotionalism of the day before had worn itself out, and emotion again became important. Hewitt had not been emotional about Mary in the morning, only analytical. That was an act of digestion. But when Mary had been assimilated, she crept into his feelings with extraordinary rapidity. Every item showing how other people loved her added to his own reasons for loving her.

He called her over the telephone, with the hope of hearing her voice. He had not seen her for nearly twenty-four hours and she had been out of Alston, an experience that might have changed her. He could hardly get to the telephone quickly enough, once he decided to call her. Mary was playing golf at the club, Mrs. Trimble told him.

Hewitt was disappointed. He felt, indeed, as if she had gone to the club on purpose to evade him. But this feeling passed.

Presently Hewitt decided to write her a note. He selected a box of stationery with care. It must be white, but he had difficulty deciding between the square

and conventional club envelopes. He eventually bought the conventional variety. He did n't want this affair of writing a note to seem too studied.

The first note he composed, Hewitt wrote painstakingly. The writing, upon examination at completion, was deplorably neat and unlike his usual sprawling, broad-lined hand. The expression was stiff and formal. It might have been addressed to Mrs. Patton or Mrs. Lombard — well, not quite that, but it was formal. He tore it into small pieces and deposited them carelessly in a waste-paper basket by Mr. Smith's desk, and then, feeling that it was too conspicuous by reason of the smallness of the bits, tore up an old letter in the basket and spread the pieces over the first.

Incidentally, Hewitt did some work for Mr. Smith's store, his salary demanding such service. Then he went back to the note again.

Hewitt had long before seen that Mary was primarily interested in him because he had intellectual tendencies. Had he arrived as a stranger in Alston, with no claims to distinction as a thinker, he would have been ignored by Mary. He did not feel slighted by this knowledge; all the world was distinctive by accomplishment or inheritance, and was admired for that distinctiveness by others in the world. The intellectual was an indissoluble part of his youthful being. Mary Young was indispensable to caste three because of her possession through inheritance and training of a vivid personality. It was no more to his discredit that he be not indispensable, but important, to Mary

because of his bias toward the intellectual. If Mary valued him primarily for his intellectualism, and this note failed to show the quality — horrible!

Hewitt dashed off the next note in his natural, sprawling, broad-lined writing, dashes doing for other marks of punctuation. The capitals were printed; the whole was spontaneous looking. It was thoughtless and careless in appearance, unworthy of him. He slipped this draft under a pile of clean paper and reached down a book for Mrs. Chancellor from the top shelf.

“But this is n’t the Mark Twain he wants,” she laughed, when Hewitt got down from the steps, holding the copy of “Huckleberry Finn” out to him.

“We have n’t ‘Tom Sawyer.’ Tell her that ’s just as good.”

Hewitt returned to his writing with a hidden impatience. He had been standing at a back show-case, but now he sat down at Mr. Smith’s desk with a sigh of relief. By compromising between the neat and the careless, he finally produced a note which was satisfactory to his critical eye. “*Ma Chérie*,” it began, that being a phrase Hewitt had culled lately from his exceedingly elementary study of French.

Ma Chérie:

I wonder if you are happy to-day — you who so want happiness.

If happiness were a fruit to be plucked from the highest bough of a tree, I would climb and bring it down to lay it in the lap of my love.

But happiness is a vegetable in one's own garden, planted and tended by one's own hands, giving sometimes greatly, sometimes niggardly.

It is not a plant easily brought to fruit.

In such a garden as that of your soul, it should give greatly, more often than niggardly, however.

You are so beautiful and splendid, *ma Chérie*,—like a fine flower that a gardener has brought to blossom by plucking away the other buds and allowing the juices of the plant to flow only into this one.

HEWITT.

He reread this note with growing dissatisfaction. He seemed to have been obsessed by that garden figure. One might think him the product of his father's wishes, to judge by that note. It was poetic and true, he thought, but you did n't need to run an idea in the ground just because it was a good one.

But Hewitt did n't write it over again. It — and he — should stand or fall on its merits. He addressed it, careful to keep the same compromise between neatness and carelessness as he had used in the note itself. He surveyed the inscribed envelope with critical pride.

When Mr. Smith came to look over business before going home, Hewitt asked him if he might run down the street for a minute.

"I want to attend to some business," he said, half-abashed.

"Run ahead, Son. I'm not a bear."

Hewitt walked with dignity down Meridian Street, with greater dignity than usually marked his carriage. It was the result of his inclination to run and a con-

trolling determination to disregard this inclination, both of which were due to his holding his first love-letter in his hand.

The Lombard car swung into Eleventh Street as he was crossing it. Hewitt looked quickly into it, afraid lest he should see Mary Young. She was not there, and relief released his taut heart and allowed it to settle again into place.

At the telegraph-office he covered his trembling confusion with a debonnair assumption that sending love-notes was an everyday matter with people, and especially commonplace to him.

"Send a boy with this note, will you?" he told the woman at the desk, and placed a dime on it.

Then he sauntered out. He repeated the words of the note to himself as he walked. "If happiness were a fruit to be plucked from the highest branch of a tree, I would climb and bring it down to lay it in the lap of my love." Next he repeated that phrase about a vegetable;—"beautiful and splendid, like a fine flower that a gardener has brought to blossom by plucking —" Hewitt's heart behaved in the way it was accustomed to behave when he saw Mary. Suddenly he stopped. "Plucked!" He had used that word twice! He had repeated it! The joy was instantly gone out of his first love-letter. Repetition of a noticeable word! The error was irreparable. Mary would notice it. Any intellectual would notice such a thing.

When he reached the store, Hewitt was silent while he watched the crowds pass the windows. He was

waiting for Mrs. Chancellor to come to the front of the store so that he could go home to supper. He had practically spoiled that letter, he decided.

"Where's the meat, Hewie?" Grace asked him at the door.

Vacancy.

"You did n't forget that meat, did you? I told you at noon, just as you got up from the table, to stop at the Checkered Front grocery and get a slice of ham for supper, because I thought that after I cooked a big dinner to-day, a slice of ham with gravy would be enough for supper. You remember that I told you?"

Her white forehead, which always seemed about to break into perspiration, did so now. She sighed over the idiosyncrasies of Man, and wiped her fat white hands upon her apron.

"I'll go back," said Man resignedly, as he always is resigned before the sighing scorn of Woman. "I forgot all about it."

"It'll make supper so late that you'll hardly get back to the store on time. I don't see why you don't remember things. You get moodier every day. You're always thinking about something, but never about the thing you ought to be thinking about. You —"

Woman was maligning the thinker, but Hewitt was out of hearing. The end of the beautiful week was not yet.

Mary called Hewitt up that night when the store was deserted. She had loved the note. He must write her another one some time. She was proud of being a flower. This last remark was meant to be funny, because Mary gurgled into the telephone as she said it. Hewitt was not amused, however. Those phrases were sacred, in a way, and he did n't want her to talk about them so that other people could hear her. He was afraid the Trimbles were not away.

"What kind of a flower do you think I am?" she asked him, with more gurgling. She must think that awfully funny! So Hewitt decided not to be outdone in a sense of humor, and laughed too.

"I think you are a blazing sun-flower."

"Oh, no! I refuse to be. I want to be a rose or an — orchid or something expensive."

"If you are intent on expense, I'll say an orchid, then. That fits you."

"You mean that I'm expensive?"

"Rather, I should imagine. That's one reason why I'm not going to marry you."

"Are there any others?"

"No. That's enough."

"I'm not expensive. I'm not at all expensive! I'm simple in my tastes. I'm a simple maid with a few desires. I could put that in a song, could n't I? 'A simple maid with few desires.' It sounds like poetry, I think."

"You *are* a song."

"You're making fun of me. Please, will you write

me another note some time? And make me a song?"

"Yes," he said very low into the mouthpiece, his voice full of significance.

"Good-night," came faintly, reluctantly.

Hewitt was angry when a young manufacturer who had shown evidence of having ideas during a conversation earlier in the spring came in to buy some newspapers. He was a young man "with a head," that term representing to Hewitt the highest praise he could bestow on a fellow human being; but who wants a mood of quiet ecstasy, generated by speech with Mary Young, to be broken into by any young man's conversation, head or no head?

"Fine day," said the young manufacturer, pausing before he went out.

"Mighty fine," assented Hewitt, examining a bottle of ink on the counter and wondering who under heaven had left it there, and then remembering that he had left it there himself.

"I suppose you have n't made any arrangements for building a skyscraper across the street where that restaurant and shoe-shining shop are?" the manufacturer continued, ready to break into a laugh when Hewitt showed appreciation of this thrust.

"No. I thought I'd let you build a park, and if I liked the fishing, I'd change my plans about skyscrapers," said Hewitt, but there was no invitation to continue the discussion.

"Well, we'll see," smiled the man, and walked out, scanning the head-lines of his paper.

CHAPTER XV

THE beautiful week did end, of course.

It ended on Saturday afternoon. Hewitt was working hard, because there was always a rush on the last day of the week when the country people surged into Alston to buy anything from a shoe to a tooth, the latter from the advertising dentists who had "parlors" in the building next to the best drug-store. Saturday, consequently, was not Hewitt's best thinking day. He was driven to action by necessity, and his mind became muddled with impressions, distinct among which was a wavering line of customers who were definite or indefinite in their demands, according as they were positive or passive of temperament. He hated Saturdays with an awful hatred, although no one, to observe his smile and his readiness for service, would have guessed the blackness of mood that lay behind it.

During the afternoon, when the store was most crowded, Ernestine Smith ran in the door and went back to her father. She did not wait for him to finish with his customer, but burst into the middle of the transaction.

"Daddy, we want to use the gasoline car this afternoon! Katherine Miller has a guest from Chicago,

and we are going to drive over to Marion for dinner. You call for my 'electric,' if you want a car, will you?"

Mr. Smith, in his usual rôle of doting parent, did not mind using the 'electric,' and Ernestine was off through the open door to the car outside. In it Hewitt could see Katherine and some other girls — and Mary Young! After the first glance he had eyes only for Mary. She wore a drooping black hat and a dark suit. She was leaning forward to talk to a girl who must be the guest, and her eyes were eager. Here was another person to impress! This idea popped into Hewitt's mind, but he thrust it out again. He refused to be disloyal to wonderful Mary.

She did not look in, though he was consumed with a desire to have her do so. She was still leaning forward eagerly when the car went off.

Hewitt turned back to his work with a sinking heart. The world was, after all, a bleak affair, where one wanted and wanted, and only found a crumb here and there. What did he want? Well, just now he wanted to be out of a beastly town where a leisure class, intent upon amusing itself, flung its leisurely enjoyment into your face and made you feel like a worm whose work was useless, whose existence was unimportant. "A person of no importance," he paraphrased from Wilde, with a tinge of bitterness.

Thinking had then to give away to action, because a doctor wanted to order a new book and a woman in a lacy hat with a vacuous smile under it, wanted

a fifty-cent box of pink stationery. Hewitt had a notion to ask her whether she did not know that real women did not use pink stationery in their correspondence, women, that is, who counted, women like Mary Young. Yes, after all, Mary was the one who counted. And what was she? A clever woman who chose to amuse herself. That was what Hewitt's ideals of Woman had come to. All other women who worked and strove and thought — they had receded unadmired into the background. Mrs. Chancellor, his fellow-clerk, whose husband was dead — Grace knew all about how he had died, with not a thing to eat in the house at the time — worked all day and every day, with no prospect of a pause in her labor, to support herself and her little girl. She washed and ironed at night, and sewed when she could get a minute from her work at the store. Mrs. Chancellor he had come to regard as a very commonplace woman who did not count. Grace, the soul of loyalty to everything bearing the name of Stevenson, did not count. Women who worked for art or social reform or charity or families or any ideal did not count. No one counted, except leisure-class, parasitic Mary Young!

A parasite on society. That was what she was. So was Ernestine Smith and Katherine Miller and Charlotte Hendricks and every other young girl in Alston who cared about nothing in the world except amusement. They spent all their days and nights amusing themselves, or resting up so that they might continue to amuse themselves. Society in the large

could go hang, for all these young caste three women cared! They were selfish, egotistic, yet without the brains to be egoistic!

Again business put a temporary stop to Hewitt's thought.

The week beautiful was, indeed, ending.

No person should count who did not help in the world's work. Altruism was an advance over selfishness. Yet these parasites—how he grew to love that word!—hardly knew the meaning of altruism. They were the sort who had been sucking the good out of society and putting nothing back for generations of idlers! They were the same sort of plutocrats who had lived off the toil of generations of sweat-shop workers of one kind or another since society became specialized enough to sustain a plutocracy. That their sustenance was derived from their fathers' unsweated businesses—as Ernestine's was—had no bearing, as far as Hewitt was concerned. Some one paid for what they spent in leisure. Some one had to work harder, in order that they might have leisure. That was the law.

Mary Young was even worse than the others. She did n't have enough money to entirely pay her own way; she stayed in caste three by flattering the backbone of the caste, by being eager and zestful and putting value on what they possessed by her interest in it, by making others think themselves indispensable to her and by proving that she was indispensable to them. Here was parasitism of the worst order!

Writhing with denunciations, Hewitt nearly lost a sale.

The world was a beastly mess, anyway. People who had clever heads got on. Work was n't going to get a man anywhere, unless it were science, where you dealt with nature, which had n't any illusions to be filled with air of man's making. Cleverness was all that counted! The people who were determined to help society help itself did n't get on in a worldly way. They—the scientists, artists, educators, and scholars—gave their lives and received a kick, like as not. A superintendent of schools in a nearby town the size of Alston had committed suicide the week before. Mr. Smith had known him.

"Fine man. Gave his life for that school system. And what did he get out of it? They kicked him into the wall when they got the chance." So Mr. Smith had spoken in wrath. A biologist whom Mr. Woody knew had spent his life in studying South American fish, with the purpose of attempting to put another link in the evolutionary theory. He lived with five children on a sum which Mr. Smith would have considered a mere pittance for two. And because he was a professor in a university, he had to keep up an appearance of living respectably.

Some day the world would find out that men who fooled them or built railroads for them or cornered their food supply were not such men as those who gave their lives and energies to society without adequate pay. The world, as Hewitt saw it on that Saturday

afternoon at the end of the beautiful week, was a vast conglomeration of mediocre people who worshipped other mediocre people who supplied them with ideals of material gain. Money, money, money! It was a grand old world. The brilliant people who did worthwhile things? The Lord save them; the mediocre people surely would n't. It paid, then, to pitch into life and take what you wanted. Grab everything in sight!

This train of thought left Hewitt hot and exhausted. He made the world's ingratitude a personal matter, as though he had done something to deserve gratitude and then had n't received it. In calmer moments he knew that scientists and scholars and artists and public servants have joys the masses know not of, but these moments at the end of the beautiful week were not notably calm. They might be called stormy moments. and Mary, the cause of this distaste for a materialistic world, continued to be joyful in the Smiths' car. Hewitt could follow her in his mind's eye between spurts of work.

"Yon Cassius looks like some one I know," said a voice that sounded familiar.

Hewitt whirled around. Kenneth Reed was coming toward him.

"Why so lean and hungry, like any Cæsar's ghost?"

Hewitt lost some of his melancholy and became more un-Cassius-like.

"Gee, I'm glad to see you, Reed! Sit down until I can get rid of this approaching customer."

"I can't sit down; I'm in a hurry. I'm in this town for one hour between trains. I'm then off on the 'traction' for the north of this grand old Hoosier state. Thence to Chicago. What shall I tell Paul and his wife?"

"Tell them I wish — No, don't."

"Who's kicked you now?"

"Nobody, but this town palls on one."

"Sure. How's Mary Young?"

"She and the Alston élite are out amusing themselves." Sarcasm would creep in, despite Hewitt.

"Don't be harsh, boy. What do you expect young ladies to do? Not to work and spoil their complexions, I hope?"

Hewitt laughed, and suddenly became ashamed of his labels of parasite and egotist. A beautiful woman might be her own excuse for existing. There would n't be much use in having everybody with a decent amount of work and leisure, if there were n't people like Mary in the world to make life jolly afterwards.

"But look here, brother," Reed continued, when the customer had left, "don't fall in love with Mary Young. She's not your kind, and she's been in the game enough years to take what she wants without caring who's hurt. So stay out of the woods, even if you do have a little gun you think is pretty good. D'you hear?"

Hewitt looked up quickly from the box he was unpacking. Immediately he returned to his work, to

cover the flush that he could feel rising in his cheeks. He wanted to tell Reed to mind his own business, but telling him would give away the fact that he had fallen in love with Mary Young. So he kept on with the box until he felt himself growing calm again.

When he arose, brushing his palms against one another, he pulled Reed's head forward in great good humor and laughed.

"Don't worry about Mary, old sour grapes. Bet you're in love with her yourself."

"You're off the track." Reed examined Hewitt with a frown. Then he laughed. "We all have to learn," he said with a grin. "I'm off," he added soon after. "Well, this life and the next one, maybe. So long, Stevenson."

Hewitt watched him stride down Meridian Street toward the traction station.

Recommendations to save ourselves, even when the danger is imminent and discernible, are likely to be *de trop*.

After supper he composed another note to Mary.

Alston is very black to-day, because you are not in it. I suppose they hardly need any electric-lights in Marion to-night.

To me, you are the sun and the moon and the seven stars.

I hope you are happy. If you are not, call to me and I will come, like David the shepherd boy, when the devils entered into Saul. My harp will be magic, because I am playing to you.

YOUR DEVOTEE.

P. S. Didn't you think to look into Smith's this afternoon?

Hewitt decided to send this note by mail. A messenger would get to the Trimble house before Mary arrived home, he was afraid. He put it in his pocket. On further thought, however, he decided to go to a florist's shop and send it with some flowers. In trepidation he chose a corsage bouquet of roses and sweet peas.

"Don't send them until after nine," he said. "Oh, yes," he added, with an elaborate effect of carelessness, "put this note in with them."

After that the world seemed less the haunt of the mediocre idealizing the mediocre and more a normal state where you got some of the things you wanted, if you played the game with enough skill. You probably wanted too much, anyway.

Mary thanked him for the flowers with a note.

You are a sweet boy to send Mary the corsage. She is wearing it to-day to dinner. It looks boo'ful! The note was boo'ful, too.

I am so sorry I forgot to look in. We were in such a hurry, and Katherine had a guest.

MARY.

Hewitt folded this in his pocket, and wore it out with reading. There was no word in it of when he was to see her again.

The next week, when he had gone three days without seeing her, he wrote another letter.

Mary:

Where are the sun and the moon and the seven stars?

David plays to himself on a harp which gives forth only

dull music. It is not a magic harp, because Saul has never listened to its notes. "Where is Saul?" David calls out in anguish, and "Where is Saul?" comes back the echo.

No reply came to this note. Hewitt learned indirectly, through Mr. Smith, that Mary was assisting Ernestine in giving a series of parties at the Country Club.

"We've had a house full of people for a week, dumn it!" said Mr. Smith one morning. "I wish all the men in this state who have young daughters would keep them at home."

Despite this outburst, however, he told Hewitt one noon, after he had appeared in the morning in his best suit and hat and a clean, unspotted vest, with a new black ribbon on his glasses, that he would not be back until late.

"Luncheon at the Grand. I'm giving it," he added, jerking his glasses the length of their cord. "They may leave now, Son — these dumn guests of Ernestine's. Don't ever have guests, Hewitt. Or a daughter, either. They're unhandy. They want you to do things you don't want to."

The three days lengthened into two weeks, and still Hewitt had not seen Mary. The Smith guests had all gone to their respective homes, to Mr. Smith's expressed delight. Hewitt wondered if Mary had gone away, and just as he had decided that this conclusion was correct, she came into the store with Katherine Miller. They wanted bridge score-cards, original ones, if Smith's had any, Katherine said, without

seeming to remember that she had ever been introduced to Hewitt. Mary smiled at him and went on talking to Katherine.

"I do wish we had sent to Chicago. There's a little shop on Michigan Avenue where you can get the dearest ones. Hand-painted, you know. Prettier than the ones Mildred Patton got in Indianapolis last week."

"I'll send for some next time," Katherine said. "I'll take a dozen of these," she added to Hewitt.

He was slow in wrapping them.

"How's Hewitt?" Mary asked, when he handed the package to them.

"All right," he said listlessly.

When they had disappeared down the street, he walked to the back door and stood looking into the alley. A rural mail-delivery wagon was drawing up at the back door of the post-office. A bearded old man climbed out and exchanged jocularities with a loafer on the steps. Disagreeable smells from a restaurant on Eleventh Street permeated the air. The smell of cooking onions came to Hewitt. He hated it. Through the trees on the lawn next to the post-office he could see some wagons trundling along, and a girl was talking to a young man on the sidewalk. Some children bumped a hoop into them, and ran off without seeming to care.

The air was warm, and a gust of wind brought a stronger scent of cooking onions. They smelled awful! Hewitt sat down on a low table back of

Mr. Smith's desk. Those onions made him sick. He grew white about the mouth and a pained look deepened in his eyes. Things took to swimming before him.

He presently decided to go around to the drug-store on Eleventh Street and get something to quiet his churning stomach, but when he tried to get up, everything turned black and he had to sit down again. He leaned his head on his hand and wished he had some cold ice-water, with lemon.

"What's the matter, Son?" Mr. Smith asked, when he came back to his desk. "Not sick, are you? You'd better go home. What can I get for you? You look white as a sheet. Mrs. Chancellor, come here! Do something for this boy. He looks like he's going to faint!"

Mrs. Chancellor sent Mr. Smith to the drug-store and bathed Hewitt's face in cold water, though he resented this sturdily and wanted to be let alone.

"I'm all right," he kept saying. "I'll go home in a minute. I'm all right. Don't bother."

Mr. Smith brought the iced liquid the prescription clerk had prepared for him.

"Drink this, boy!" he roared, as gently as any sucking dove, and mopped his forehead and might have been sick himself, to judge from the worried look on his face.

Mrs. Chancellor held Hewitt's head.

"I always — have these — spells," he said indistinctly, "in hot weather — sometimes."

He opened his eyes to drink the liquid they gave him, and then lay back against the desk and closed his eyes.

"It was — those — onions!" he murmured apologetically. "The smell always — makes me sick."

"You'd better sit still for a while," Mrs. Chancellor said in her gentle voice.

"I'll send for the car. I'll take you home," said Mr. Smith, still mopping. "Dumn it! If I did n't think he was going to faint!"

"I'm all right," Hewitt reiterated, trying to sit up and making a bad job of it. "I'm not going home, Mr. Smith. It was kind of you to send for the car, but I'll be all right in a minute."

"He is better," said Mrs. Chancellor, as Hewitt sat down in a chair by the door, where the air was cooler.

"H'm," Mr. Smith said. "He looked pretty sick to me for a while."

"He *was* sick."

The next day Mary Young called Hewitt over the telephone.

"Ernestine said that her father was awfully worried about you yesterday. Were you dreadfully ill? Was that the reason you were so haughty when I came in with Katherine?"

"I was n't so very ill, Mr. Smith exaggerated. He'd never seen me have one of those spells before. I was n't haughty with you."

"Yes, you were. I wanted to say something, but I was afraid of you. You are so terrible when you

are cross, Hewitt! I've been wanting to see you awfully."

A pause followed. She probably expected Hewitt to say something, but he could think of nothing to say.

"I've wanted to see you, but I've been rushed to death lately. Everyone has had guests. Parties, bridge, everything!"

Another pause.

"Hewitt, why don't you talk to Mary?" The intimate tone was in her voice, luring him to forget that she had neglected him. "I'm saying everything that's being said."

"What is there to say?" Hewitt asked helplessly. He was still feeling the effects of the sudden sickness of the day before.

"A million things. You have n't written me a note in ages. I've wanted one. Have you been ill before?"

"No; just yesterday. It was the heat. I —"

"I thought perhaps that was why you had n't called me up." She was loathe to refer to this neglect, her voice said.

He had not called her up. He had been waiting for a sign from her. One rather expected Mary to take the initiative. Hewitt did, at any rate. And the undercurrent persistently ran through his thought that she had not wanted him, or she would have made the signal.

"I was afraid you were too busy for me," he said. "I was afraid you might not want to see me."

"Hewitt! I always want to see my friends, when I can. When are you going to tell me about all the new books you have discovered?"

"Whenever you say."

"Let's see. To-night's bridge at the Brandons'. To-morrow I'm out to dinner. The next day — You may come then."

"I'd like to come."

So, after all, there were to be other beautiful weeks — perhaps.

Hewitt could hear the Trimble children racing through the upper hall when he arrived there on the appointed night. Dr. Jimmy stopped on the veranda to talk to him about business conditions.

"The Democrats don't seem to have brought that panic all the calamity howlers expected, do they? I'm disappointed. I always like people to get what they want. It struck me that a good many people *wanted* that panic, just to show what good prophets they were."

"Soon there won't be such a thing as a panic. We're just finding out these days that they are not necessary," Hewitt answered.

"Country used to go to smash, figuratively speaking, every time the administration changed, especially when the good old moneyed Republicans went out," Dr. Jimmy laughed.

Hewitt opened the screen door for Mary, who was coming downstairs, her slender, lithe figure lighted up

by the glow from the rose piano-lamp. Wonderful Mary!

The chill which had been over his emotions ever since he had last seen her under conditions favorable to him evaporated into thin air. Again the sun and the moon and the seven stars were bright, and he forgot about women who counted. There was only one who counted.

"Politics?" she questioned, giving him her best, most brilliant smile. "Jimmy adores finding some one who will listen respectfully to his political theories. I suppose you did — out of politeness."

The noise of the children upstairs died away, and the doctor went to his office. Mary bound the chains fast again. They were not difficult to bind.

The only people in one's life who really counted, after all, were the charming, beautiful women who understood you. Hewitt did not attempt to be silly; he was just thankful again to be smiled at and persuaded into saying the things he wanted to say. There was no forest, as Kenneth Reed had said, containing a vampirish Mary "who knew the game" and was not Hewitt's kind, no little inefficient gun in Hewitt's hand. In a flowery meadow a nymph piped to the gods; and a hairy satyr, ugly and unworthy, creeping in, listened, was enthralled, went near, until, entrapped by the music meant for gods, he lay in the grasses and was happy not to be driven away.

CHAPTER XVI

OTHER beautiful weeks which followed were not so bright as the first. Such weeks are never as bright as the first. Besides, Hewitt was deprived of self-confidence. He was afraid. Mary had forgotten him once. At any moment she might do so again. She did know the game.

Knowing that his claim on her attention had from the first rested on his being an ugly duckling among Alston's barn-yard fowls, a duckling who might eventually prove to be a soaring eagle, Hewitt played this card with all the skill he could muster. But he was never very skilful where people were concerned.

"Naturally we are all selfish. Altruism is so hard to attain, because all our primary instincts are for saving ourselves at whatever cost. Let us, you and I, take altruism for our own," he wrote Mary.

"Love is an ideal. It is something to strive for. It only comes to those who strive," he wrote again.

"Living is a fine art. Most people make it a sordid business. I love you because you know it is an art, even while you are unable to make it what you desire. To live fully—that is beautiful! But sometimes I think, dear, that you think you are living fully, when in reality you are only skimming the surface of excitement."

All the time, unselfish as he was on occasion and always wished to be, Hewitt knew that he wanted something besides making Mary live to the limit of her capacities. He wanted to dominate her thought. Sometimes he felt he had succeeded. At unexpected moments she showed that she had been thinking about something he had said or read to her long before. At others he was certain that he had never dented the smooth surface of her knowing mind. Her thoughts seemed to flow in the old grooves, the grooves that generations of caste three had made, changed by new lands and new environments, but only slightly changed.

Hewitt was amazed at Mary's inability to enter into the lives of those outside her own circle. She was splendidly kind and open to everyone, but that was only because the ideal of herself as a frank, open-hearted, democratic woman was stronger than her ideal of herself as a follower of the rules of caste three. As long as he remained away from her, Hewitt dissected and analyzed her and her Alstonian relations with admirable abstraction; but when he was with her he lost all power to think. He only wanted to worship. There was never any silliness, no kisses. Sometimes she caught at his hand or patted it, just as she might have done with Ernestine or Katherine or any of her girl-friends.

Hewitt's analysis of Mary became, as time went on, more pronouncedly critical the better he knew her. He began to see qualities in her which he could not

admire. Moods attacked him. He became unhappy and discontented. He read less, and dreamed more. He grew nervous and fretful. He had fits of temper when he wanted to argue with Mary about herself. She was n't what he wanted her to be; she must change. She gave too much of her time to Ernestine Smith, for example, who was a beastly little inane snob not worth anyone's attention. Also, he disliked Katherine Miller.

He introduced these topics at various times to Mary, and thought more than he talked about them.

"Don't be jealous," she told him one night, when he had been especially caustic.

"You don't care what people are; you only care for what they have," he retorted bitterly.

He knew the quizzical look which came into her eyes when she was annoyed and wanted to ask him what *he* had.

"It's only money! Alston is money-mad," he added.

"Alston, Hewitt, is very much like every other city in the world. Men have always wanted the advantages which money gives them. Why, even your precious old books could n't be written if there were n't some men with leisure. Leisure depends on money."

"Yes, but here they *think* about money and nothing else. With the men who write, it's only a means to an end."

"It's a means here, too. We're all hunting the same thing — satisfaction, happiness."

"But such happiness!"

"We've said all this before, haven't we? Let us try to be amusing, since we live in a town devoted to amusement."

Mary tried to make him laugh, but Hewitt sat frowning in discontent.

"If I had money you would marry me, wouldn't you?" he said suddenly and sharply. He knew, even as he said it, that Mary would not marry him if he had a million dollars.

"No," she answered softly.

"Why?" he demanded angrily.

"For one reason, you are too childish." Mary was annoyed beyond words, and she walked into the house and left him with his petulance.

When Hewitt had convinced himself that he was a lunatic who had better watch himself before he endangered too flagrantly his position, his cherished position, as her friend, he went into the house. Mary was sitting reading the newspaper.

"Mary, you'll forgive me, won't you? I don't know what's the matter with me. I don't know why I say these things to you. I'm a cad. You've been wonderful to me."

Perhaps because she was afraid Hewitt was going to be emotional and cry about it, Mary let him sit on the stairs and talk again to her. He thought she sighed wearily when he left the veranda later in the evening.

Another time Katherine Miller came to take Mary riding while Hewitt was present.

"If Hewitt will come —" Mary began from her place beside the automobile.

"I'm awfully sorry. I have an engagement downtown at eight-thirty," he said, rising and coming down the walk toward them. He glanced nonchalantly at his watch. "It's about that hour now," he added. "You run ahead, Mary."

Mary had gazed at him questioningly. She knew he had no engagement. Then she smiled bravely and jumped into the car, with only a good-bye wave of her hand to him.

Mary punished him for a few days, but a more than usually contrite note softened her.

"Why did you behave that way about going riding?" she asked him later.

"I did n't want to go, and I did n't want you to miss your fun."

"My dear boy, do you think I value riding as much as that? Why did n't you want to go?" she continued persistently.

"Because I hate Katherine Miller."

"Why?"

"She makes me feel — unimportant."

"Maybe —" she began, and he caught the innuendo before she stopped herself.

"She's despicable!" he cried out, paying Katherine for Mary's thrust by an increase in hate. "I hate her!"

"You hate so many people, dear."

Hewitt's fury mounted.

"Not so many. Only the ones who let you make fools of them."

"Hewitt!" Mary said, biting her lips.

"They're all crazy about you, and you work them to the limit. You get exactly what you want from people, and then you fling them into the gutter."

The hurt look that instantly clouded Mary's eyes brought Hewitt to her feet.

"I didn't mean it, Mary! I—I don't know what's the matter with me. I love you more than anyone in the world, but I can't seem to think anything but ugly things about you any more."

"I'm sorry. I suppose I'm not a very beautiful subject for thought. You had better stop thinking about me at all," she said, with a sad smile. "I don't like quarreling with my friends. It's rather disgusting, isn't it?"

"It's awful! I swear I'll never say mean things to you again. You do forgive me, don't you?"

"Yes. Don't get excited. People can hear you."

After this Hewitt was careful for a time; he could n't afford to take such risks. But his thinking went on. The idea that Mary "worked" people grew in him. She had little natural charm, he decided; she was merely artful. He could see it all. He composed notes to let her see that he saw through her devices for keeping people slavishly attached to her—notes in which veiled insults against her egotism were shrouded in figures of speech which, even in the midst of his emotion, brought a glow of pride to their

creator. He wrote about the "Sahara sands of her egotism." That was not original; he had read it somewhere. She was a fallen Buddha, a burst bubble, a bee that sucked the honey from a thousand flowers. There was nothing delightful now about this last quality.

Yet, in the midst of his turmoil of writing these denunciations, Hewitt sneered at his own weakness and called himself a fool for having been taken in by the very qualities which he now detested. He had always been a weakling. He had no power of action. Action was strength; idle thought was a snare and a delusion. He had idealized Mary. He had tried to idealize himself as a devotee who, demanding nothing in return for his love, was gaining everything. But when put to the test, as now, he wanted returns. He was tired, dog-tired, of getting nothing but a minimum of attention, just because he had no prestige of riches and position to offer her.

In his sane moments Hewitt wondered what he did want.

As Mary had said, all wisdom was not in books. A reader, a reader of imaginative literature, was sustaining himself on unreality. He took to hating poetry and novels. What was an intellectual? One who wanted material things and, not getting what he asked for, deceived himself and the world into thinking that he wanted only the thin things of the mind. Fools!

There was no everlasting soul, Hewitt decided.

There was no such thing as immortality. Those who did n't get what they wanted on this earth, because fate or their own silly ideals kept them from getting what everyone wanted, tried to soothe themselves with old tales of another world where those who did n't get on in this one would achieve success. Fatuous dream of weak souls! The battle was to the strong or to the clever. Even those wise old Jews, before Christianity swamped the world in its dreams of a future existence, recognized this fact. Follow the law of the wise men, they said; and then protected themselves right here on this earth. Theirs was no God of Love. Rather he was a God of Effort, who punished weakness and abhorred disobedience of law.

Hewitt generally reached this point at night, after he had torn up a scathing note couched in flamingly scorching figures of speech. He then wanted to get up and walk around the room in order to relieve the caged-animal feeling that choked him, but he was always afraid of waking Grace. She would be sure to come to his door in her night cap and ugly high-necked gown, open it gently, and ask him, while blinking the sleep out of her heavy eyes, what was the matter. He did n't want Grace to come in; so he rolled restlessly in his bed and wondered why he had ever come to Alston to be tortured by Mary Young.

At last he went to sleep.

Note after note Hewitt destroyed. He spent hours composing them in his mind, but his common sense

always spoke at the last minute and he tore them up.

Once, however, his common sense deserted him.

He wrote a note early in the morning, hurriedly and excitedly, after he had spent a restless night, a night sleepless and half-maddened by the hopelessness of the circle of unanswerable thought. He thrust it into the box at the post-office before he had time to repent of his folly. He had a dim idea that if Mary knew how tortured he was, she would do something about it, relieve him of it. She was paying a great deal of attention to Arthur Morgan, a Yale man who was working in Alston during the summer. Hewitt himself was beginning to mean less and less to her, he was certain. This note would wake her up. She would find that she must make some effort to keep him in her train; she could not pull the wool over his eyes as easily as she thought.

"Thank you," the note said among other things, "for showing me the clumps of buttercups in your marsh, but now I see them no more. Only mud, *mud!* Not long ago I would have laughed at all the little gods, and said, 'Of course there is mud; but if I choose to see only the flowers, then I can laugh at you, little gods!' But now I am ready to move to other gardens, beautiful gardens. You, being heavy with mud, cannot move on. *Adieu, ma chérie des autres jours.*"

All day Hewitt kept thinking of Mary reading this. She would half-close her eyes and read it twice. A faint smile would light up her face. Then she would

tear the note carefully and throw it away, supremely indifferent. He writhed at the thought.

In other pictures he saw Mary read it with the smile growing fainter and fainter, and she ended by looking puzzled and sad.

What Mary *did* do, Hewitt did not for one moment anticipate. He was standing at the stationery counter the next afternoon when she came in.

"Good afternoon, Hewitt," she said, smiling brightly at him. Then she turned toward Mrs. Chancellor, who was standing at the cash register. Mary threw her arm carelessly around her. "I want some stationery, dear. White or brown. Not the kind I bought last week. I did n't like that."

Her other arm she threw about Ernestine, and the three, without noticing Hewitt further, came down to where he stood. He moved away. He went to the back of the store and remained there long after Mary and Ernestine had gone. He felt sick and weak, dreadfully weak, as though his legs were caving in. Mary had chosen an excellent way of hurting him. She was a devil!

Joe Bales was standing on the corner when Hewitt left the store that night.

"Hello, Joe!" Hewitt called. He went up and stood beside him, smoking. He talked about the weather, and when enough time had passed to make his next remark sound casual, Hewitt said:

"Say, Joe, where does Eleanor Rowe live?"

"Why, did n't you hear?" asked Joe quickly.

"Hear what?"

"Why did you want to know where she lived?"

"I thought I'd go see her sometime."

"Say, boy; be careful! Did n't you hear about Teddy Burke? Her brother's after him. The fellows say that Teddy has got her in bad."

Joe said this last in a matter-of-fact tone, as he rolled a cigarette. Corner gossip, Hewitt decided, and he tried to be as matter-of-fact as Joe.

"H'm," he said in Mr. Smith's style.

"That's what they all say. I'm glad I stayed away from her. How's the store?"

Hewitt talked business for a while and then strolled home. He felt sorry for Eleanor Rowe. She was a credit in contrast to some of the society buds of Alston. Contrasted with Mary, the sly, wise, clever, devilish Mary, she was an angel. She gave; she did not take, take, take! Mary was angry, but not outwardly angry. She would continue to be pleasant, even cordial to him. That was caste three's way. They never displayed their anger. No; but they struck hard when they wanted to hurt.

Presently Hewitt began to wonder why he had written that note. So he wrote another note. He told Mary that she was the most wonderful woman in the world; that he was a jealous brute, jealous about Arthur Morgan; that, far from being a marsh, she was a beautiful garden (the garden again) where he loved to walk, satisfied only to smell the perfume of the flowers. He begged Mary's forgiveness.

Sending this note relieved him, although he read and studied French until after midnight, trying to make himself calm enough to sleep. Even after he had gone to bed, he rehearsed the notes over and over to himself, following every movement of Mary's in the store that afternoon. Suppose she did not forgive him?

He got up and raised the window higher. The night seemed extraordinarily warm, intolerably so.

So he was to be punished for deserting the shrine and assuming the rôle of critical spectator? Mary would see to it that he was wounded time after time, because he had doubted that she was fit for worship. She *was* an artist. There was no depth to her affection for anyone. She liked everyone who could give her something she wanted. She had liked him, because his was a temperament to heap adoration upon her, to color the already beautiful picture she had painted of herself.

Hewitt was wet with perspiration.

For two nights and days he went through a repetition of this misery, alternately hating and adoring. On the evening of the third day he walked past the Trimble house, in hope of seeing her. She came across the lawn from the Walkers' when she saw him.

"I have n't seen you in ages, have I? You're sweet to come. I'm staying all night with Hortense Brandon. You can take me over."

Hewitt glowed with relief. She was, after all, going to forgive him. She chatted impersonally of

her comings and goings. The Brandons were planning to motor through Kentucky. Perhaps she would go with them. Martha and the children were not going to the lakes this year, since the weather had remained so cool. Charlotte Walker had just returned from the East. On and on she talked, with never a word about Hewitt or marshes or buttercups or mud.

He listened intently, trying to be interested and not critical. He did n't care if Charlotte had been in China or whether the Brandons were going to India, but he wisely kept this indifference to himself. He attempted to tell her about a new book he wanted her to read, but she had already heard about it from Katherine Miller and did n't think she would like it. She was really too busy to read, with her golf.

"I'm playing so much better than last summer. Are n't you glad, Hewitt?"

He said that he was. He was the beggar; his part was to play the game, though he glanced at her suspiciously.

"When are you going to Chicago?" she asked.

"About the fifth of September." The thought of getting there had lost some of its zest. He had stopped thinking much about Chicago.

"You'll love being in school again, won't you?" she said.

"Oh, I guess so," he added indifferently.

"My dear!" she chided him. "The next thing you'll be saying an education is useless!" She laughed at him.

"Maybe it is," he said lamely. "An education does n't always get people what they want. The world's a gamble, anyway."

"Last week you said that some day I would lose, because I gambled with living."

"No. You play the game according to the rules. I can't play anything. I loathe rules."

"You play tennis."

"Not well." Hewitt was gloomy.

A week before Mary would have teased him into optimism, but to-night she went back to gossip about her friends in caste three. All the way to the Brandons' she chatted gaily.

"Will you come in with me?" she asked, as they paused in front of the house.

"You have n't forgiven me," he said in a low, miserable voice.

"Forgiven you for what?" Then her impersonal gaiety slid aside and she looked at him with a glint of scornful anger. "You can always run on to other gardens," she said as she turned away.

Hewitt touched her arm.

"Mary, you know I did n't mean that!" he cried.

"I am mud one day and beautiful buttercups the next. Don't you suppose one gets tired of your moods and your insults and your tempers? I tried to be friends. You did n't meet me half-way. I am sick of all this!"

"You never loved me! I only wanted that!"

"I liked you as much as I like anyone. I like a

great many people. You can't be selfish enough to want me to spend all my time with you. I did like you. You have changed. Good-night."

"If I try again to be what I used to be? I don't know what's the matter with me! Try me again, Mary!"

"Perhaps," was all the satisfaction she gave him.

Hewitt was unable even to read that night. He followed the incidents of his relations with Mary from the first day of their meeting. Was anyone ever so miserable, through his own fault, as he was? Now he understood Dante and Andrea del Sarto and all other men in the world's history who had loved and been scorned.

He woke up in the night. If he could only die and Mary could come and stand over him, her eyes sorrowful and that sweet, intimate smile on her lips!

Alston was to have a Young Men's Christian Association. A recently deceased old man had left Alston funds with which to build a structure to house the institution, on condition that the city should raise an equal amount. Alston needed a Y. M. C. A., every one agreed. Leading citizens therefore met to perfect plans for securing this money. Captains of teams were selected; the war was on. In two days the man who had not subscribed as much as he knew everyone thought he should subscribe began to feel uncomfortable while walking down the street. He was

likely to be confronted by a member of a team, who slapped him merrily on the shoulder and asked him for a few more thousands or hundreds or for a few more pennies, according to his known financial status.

Homer Gray came into Smith's on the first day of the campaign.

"Hello, Stevenson!" he called. "I want you on my team for this Y. M. C. A. rush."

Hewitt stopped disliking Homer Gray's air of importance.

"You're number ten on my team. This'll be some pull."

"Look here, Gray," Hewitt demurred, "I can't do anything like that. I'm busy all day."

"Smith will let you off. Every public-spirited citizen must do what he can. My team meets to-night at five-thirty. There's a dinner at the old Knights of Columbus' rooms at six for all teams. Here are a bunch of pledges and a list of names of the persons you are to see. *Get* people! Don't let anyone slide. Don't let any one get by. I've put what each one is expected by the committee to give. *Get it.*" He slapped Hewitt on the shoulder familiarly, laughed, and was off, leaving a stupefied but willing Hewitt.

The list included ten men who possibly would give more than a hundred dollars. Fifth on the list was "Charles Stevenson, Fourteenth and Jackson." Hewitt stopped to consider. So that was why he had been honored. Well, come to think of it, there had to be some reason why any one should be honored,

and this was as good as any. Other people in Alston were important because their fathers had money. Why not he?

Mr. Smith agreed to divide the day with Hewitt.

"We'll try alternate hours the first day," he said. "I'm captain of team two. I wanted you, but Homer grabbed you before I had a chance. Go to it, Son. Make good. Gray said you were a pusher, but that you had n't got out of your shell here yet. Wake up and show 'em."

Hewitt did not feel like a pusher as he started for Preston's to interview a young electrical engineer. "Two hundred" was marked beside the latter's name. Hewitt whistled. He knew the man by sight and that he had just been married. Two hundred? They surely could n't expect men to give like that.

John Earle filled out a pledge for a hundred as soon as he found that Hewitt was a team-member.

"Much obliged," Hewitt smiled. He did not urge the other to give more. "We'll do it yet," he said, in leaving.

"Of course we will. Alston always comes through," Earle answered.

Outside, Hewitt pondered. What tactics would Homer Gray have used to get the other hundred? He frankly did not know. He thought a hundred dollars, without arguing for it, was a godsend.

The next man, Waldon Kirst, was vice-president and general manager of an iron fence-post company in the vicinity of Preston's. Hewitt took him next.

"Sit down," ordered Mr. Kirst in stentorian tones, when Hewitt went into his office. He was a small man with nerves.

"I'm from team one, Y. M. C. A. fund," Hewitt began.

"Yes? That's a great thing, that Y. M. C. A. My boy's getting to the age where he needs it. I'll give you fifty dollars." He turned to fill out the pledge.

Hewitt moved uneasily. This man was down for five hundred dollars. He could n't let the four hundred and fifty slip. Homer Gray would think he was a good-for-nothing.

"Now, see here, Mr. Kirst," Hewitt said, doubtful of his ability to convince, "I — we thought you would want to give more than fifty, even. Fifty's a nice sum. We'll be glad to get it. But do you realize that that one hundred and fifty thousand dollars was only left to Alston on condition that the town raise an equivalent sum? If we don't have every cent of the money in ten days, the fund goes to charity and we get no Y. M. C. A. We *have* to get this sum. You are one of the men in town who are expected to contribute largely in order to make up the money. In the end we can expect to get five- and ten-dollar contributions from the general public, but the greater part has to be given by the big business men. I have you down for five hundred dollars. We know that you want to give what you can. Five hundred would mean, Mr. Kirst, that you are getting something more out of

this Y. M. C. A. than mere protection for your son. You would be helping to put an institution in Alston which will mean that hundreds of boys every year are given healthful recreation in an atmosphere to bring out their best qualities. It means not only your boy, but a thousand other boys in the course of a few years. Now, another thing. Your factory employs about how many men? A hundred and fifty young ones, perhaps. Half of them are unmarried, let us say. Seventy-five of your employees would join this Y. M. C. A. and become better physical specimens. Result: more work. Who gets the benefit? Your company. You also get part of it. My suggestion, Mr. Kirst, is that you give five hundred dollars or more, if you feel inclined, and that your company — outside capital owns much of this concern, does n't it? — give five hundred. How 's that? You are getting a personal benefit and the company is getting a benefit."

Hewitt paused, surprised at himself, and then blushed a little. Mr. Kirst looked at him, studying him.

"Five hundred dollars," he said, and went over to examine the landscape from the window. He drew aside the curtains the better to examine the landscape — a landscape of corrugated-iron buildings and a puffing switch-engine and a vacant lot edged with diminutive cottages. "Well," he said, "I'll make it three hundred." He was pleased with himself, but Hewitt quickly pricked this bubble.

"Mr. Kirst, if every man in this town, every big man who is in a position to command money, gives three fifths of what he could give without feeling the pressure, Alston will have no Y. M. C. A. Say you can give three hundred without quivering an eyelash. All right. Suppose you quiver an eyelash and give five hundred." Hewitt smiled Homer Gray's smile of cordial importance. One might as well do such things. "That five hundred might mean a trifle in sacrifice to you. Maybe you can't go to the motor-races at Indianapolis next year, just to make the sacrifice a big one." They both laughed, and Hewitt was glad he had remembered that Kirst was a motor-race enthusiast. "All right. Alston has a Y. M. C. A. Your boy gains by it. How about that five hundred?"

"Let's see," mused Mr. Kirst.

"Yours will be the second contribution on my list," went on Hewitt. "I'm on team one. Your name will be published near the head of the first day's list. That looks good for you and for the company. If iron fence-posts were not selling well, you could n't give five hundred. Thus it reflects your prosperity."

Walden H. Kirst made out the pledge deliberately.

"Thanks," smiled Hewitt, repeating Homer Gray again. "Now what about the company?"

"I can't tell. I hardly think they'll want to give five hundred dollars. But I'll see."

Hewitt shook hands cordially with the man.

He kept his father for his noon hour. He must step cautiously there. His diffidence, shattered by his

morning's success, returned in the presence of his family. He had thought to bring up the subject for discussion at the table, but his father was not well. He was crabbed. "I feel awful weak," he kept saying, and he ate little.

After dinner Hewitt sauntered out on the veranda and sat down. He would have preferred to tackle a hundred strangers for a thousand dollars apiece to asking his father for three hundred. Gray had him listed for five hundred, but Hewitt knew he could never get that much. Once he decided that he would tell Gray himself to approach Mr. Stevenson, and he rose with the intention of going down-town, leaving the subject untouched with his father. Then the ridiculousness of making such a suggestion to Gray struck Hewitt.

His father lay in the dining-room on the yellow plush couch, with a handkerchief over his face. Hewitt stood in the doorway observing him. He would n't have a chance in the world, even for five dollars, he felt sure. Quietly he withdrew.

He sat down on the steps. He became ashamed when he thought of that dinner where team reports were to be given. The most prominent men in Alston would be there.

He went into the dining-room again.

"Say, Father," he began, seating himself at the table and drumming restlessly on the cloth with one hand, "did you know that old man Brandt when he

died left a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to Alston for a Y. M. C. A., on condition that Alston raised the remainder?"

"I heard it. They'll never raise it." Mr. Stevenson turned his face to the wall. "I'm weak all over. I'd like to know what's the matter with me."

"They'll never raise it unless every man in Alston does his share." The onslaught had begun. Hewitt buckled on some of Homer Gray's energy, and sat up. "Gray put me on his team," he added slowly.

"He did? He's a young fool. He thinks he's going to follow in Keith's footsteps. He'll never do it. He's not a big enough man. He may land in Congress some day, if he can fool enough people with that line of talk of his. He'll never fill the governor's chair."

"He's pretty bright. He's published a book."

"Lots of numskulls publish books."

"Anyway, he put me on his team. I got a hundred dollars from a young engineer out at Preston's this morning, and five hundred from Walden H. Kirst. Langdon, at the file works, came through with three hundred. I've got Tracy, secretary of the mills, to promise two hundred. He may make it five tomorrow. What are you going to give, Father?"

The bomb fell to the ground without exploding.

"I promised Peterson at the bank I'd give a hundred."

"You'll have to come through with more than a

hundred, Father, if you want to hold up your head in this town. They're expecting five hundred from you." Hewitt had grown bold.

"They'll have to expect again. I'd like to know what's the matter with me. I'm sick all over, with pains in my head." He moved. The handkerchief fell off his head to the floor.

"I'll get you a cold cloth for your eyes," Grace called from the kitchen.

"That feels good," Mr. Stevenson said, when Hewitt had brought it in and laid it on his head. "I'd like to know what's the matter with me," he repeated.

"About this money," Hewitt began again. "It's like this, Father. Every man in this town who's known to have money and does n't give it is going to be beastly unpopular when this campaign is over and the lists are published."

"But I have n't any money," said his father slowly, as though with an effort.

"You had enough to retire."

"That was n't much. I wish I'd kept that farm. I'd feel more satisfied if I had it right now. This idea of loafing around, trying to make a few acres of garden fill up your time, is n't what it's cracked up to be. I'm not rich. I wish I was."

"You're not rich, but you could give five hundred to this Y. M. C. A. and never notice it. Come on, Father, be a sport. We need this thing. That Methodist gymnasium they've just put up back of the church does n't fill the bill by any means."

"I never thought it would. I gave fifty dollars to that because Grace wanted me to."

"Well, what it does in a small way the Y. M. C. A. will do in a large one. It's ridiculous that Alston has n't had a Y. M. C. A. before this. Consider me, for instance. I'm just at the age when a Y. M. C. A. would save my soul, keep me off the streets, and make a man of me."

A wan smile greeted this sally.

"I guess you'll get along without a Y. M. C. A., Hewie."

"But suppose I told you, Father, that your giving five hundred dollars would make a difference in the way I feel about Alston." This was said thoughtfully.

"How's that?" his father said, removing the cloth from his eyes to watch Hewitt.

"Well, it's like this: I've always felt like that ticket-speculator in a show called 'The Country Boy.' —'I'd rather be a ripple on Michigan Avenue than a tidal wave in a town like this.' Lately I've begun feeling a little differently. I've thought once or twice that this would n't be such a bad little city to settle down in, if a man had some of the things he wanted here. Not that I've passed up the university idea. I'm still strong for that. But Alston's a nice place to live, if one has the things he wants. Now, if you added five hundred dollars to that fund, I'd feel, in a way, as if Alston belonged to me. It's hard to explain, Father, but I believe I'd feel differently."

There was silence, while Mr. Stevenson replaced

the cloth on his eyes and settled himself again comfortably.

"Suppose, Hewie," he said after an interval, "suppose I put it to you this way. I'll give five hundred dollars out of the money you'll get after I'm gone." He paused. "I'm not so old; I may last twenty years yet, Hewie. Our family lives a long time. But some day you and Grace and Paul will get all I've got. I don't think it's quite fair for me to give this five hundred out of their share, too. We're living on the interest from the money from the land, and the principal is not so enormous. You can take your five hundred and give four hundred of it to this Y. M. C. A. fund, if that's what you want to do. You can keep one hundred dollars to help on your college money, and I'll pay the hundred I've already told Peterson that I'd contribute. I didn't feel as if I could put you through college, Hewie, unless you could go on the farm afterward and help put the money back into the principal. But I'd like you to come back to Alston sometime and live here."

Hewitt stood up and stretched himself.

"But I want you to put in all the five hundred under your own name, Father," he said. "I'll contribute ten dollars or so for my share. That'll look better."

For almost ten days after this conversation Hewitt let Mary Young wander in the hinterland of his mind. Being a member of team one, Y. M. C. A. Publicity Committee, meant work. It was work Hewitt grew to like. He met all the leading citizens of Alston.

He parleyed, dined, made a short and extremely boyish speech at a dinner of the workers and a longer speech to the employees of the Iron Fence-Post Company.

Chicago stock had dropped to fifty and there were no sales.

CHAPTER XVII

MARY, with her sixty — or was it a hundred? — other interests, was not particularly aware of neglect on the part of Hewitt Stevenson, clerk, intellectual, and member of team one, Y. M. C. A. Publicity Committee. When he met her on the street, after the last dollar had been pledged for the founding of the institution which was to safeguard the young manhood of Alston, he remembered the “perhaps” which had ended their last talk. She was cordial and kind, but that signified nothing. Mary would have been that to the Lord High Executioner himself, when about to relieve her of her head. Caste three never deserted their standard. Hewitt told her about his small and modest part in the campaign just closed.

“When can I see you?” he asked, scanning her face carefully in order to ascertain his exact status in her affections.

“To-morrow night I’m not doing anything,” she replied.

“May I come then?” He was less abject, more sure of himself, although he had not been able to decipher her expression. It is doubtful whether Mary Young’s expression could ever have been deciphered by an amateur decipherer. It was a very excellent mask, the mask of an expert, Mary Young’s mask.

Has it not already been stated that Mary did everything well?

She nodded, and smiled her gay smile at some passersby.

Hewitt was determined to show Mary that he was as interesting as of old. She should n't discard him on a pretext. She must know that it was the uncertainty of his position which had driven him to the figurative extravagance of that note about mud. Surely she understood youth in love — she who had seen so many youths in love. And she must have seen them. Of course there still were her faults — insincerity, superficiality, blind adherence to caste, lack of depth of affection. But we all have our faults, mused Hewitt, thinking of his own insignificant few. Man, with a mind for the big, the vital, must overlook pettiness in women, especially in beautiful women.

If he had thought to have a quiet evening with Mary on the Trimble veranda, amid talk of books and of him and of her and of Alston and of the world, Hewitt must have been disappointed when she came downstairs and told him they were going to the Hawthreys to Margaret's "open house." He was not entirely sure what an "open house" was in Alston, but he knew it must be a social gathering at which he would be bored and uncomfortable. Margaret Hawthrey was young, eighteen or less. He had n't been trained to social gatherings. They — the best and the worst of them — disturbed him tremendously. Mary knew this, he felt sure; yet she said they were going

to Margaret Hawtrey's "open house." Probably every one went to "open houses," every one being those who were eligible to enter caste three. When every one came, they probably conversed. He could see and hear them conversing, conversing on the large issues of life, the Country Club, other "open houses," absent members of the caste, each other, people who were almost in caste three, but who were not nearly enough in to be counted as "every one," golf, embroidery, travel to summer resorts, each other, the Country Club. Into all this conversation on the "large issues" he would be unable to enter, on account of paralysis of the tongue, or, at worst, of nervous centers generally; or, if he spoke, his remark would sound strange, inapropos, forced, a remark to hear, ignore politely, and let fall to the ground unanswered. His remarks at social gatherings always sounded like that, especially if the gathering consisted of young buds and girls older than the high-schoolers and younger than Mrs. Lombard. With oldish people, especially ladies, he generally succeeded better, unless Mary was present to paralyze him, to deprive him of all power even to make an audible noise which might be mistaken, by those who had never heard his voice, for an effort at speech.

Hewitt felt that Mary would have given him sincere admiration, had he possessed the social polish which characterized Joe Bales and his friends. She who was so at ease, even stimulated, in a group — the larger the group, the more stimulated she became —

could not understand tremors which robbed living of its joy when he came into contact on a purely social basis with more than one person.

But Hewitt's position with relation to Mary was not such that he could begin the evening by complaining of her decision to go to the Hawtreys' "open house." He was unnaturally good-humored during their journey to the heart of the social. He was amusing, hard-heartedly amusing, deserting his cherished position as defender of that part of humanity which had drawn the seamy side to hurl pebbles at the Alstonians she had no affection for and who could be attacked cleverly without danger. He referred glibly to the "Argus Pheasant."

"What is an 'Argus Pheasant,' Hewitt?" Mary asked curiously.

He had used the term in speaking of a newly rich woman who was a stranger in Alston and thus a mere candidate for caste three. The latter regarded her with a mixture of contempt and perplexed indecision which the rich stranger within our gates deserves and receives. She was, so the guardians of the walls had almost decided, while waiting to see who would make advances to her, an over-dressed person who threw out too evident wiles toward young men.

"An Argus Pheasant," Hewitt explained demurely and deliberately, as yet untouched by the misery he knew would come upon him in the presence of "every one," "is a bird that has developed its gorgeous plumage at the expense of its free movement."

Mary gurgled, and decided to remember that *bon mot*. Cleverness often consists in borrowing the right phrases.

The "open house" proved to be only slightly worse than Hewitt had anticipated, because his expectations had been of such a nature as to make the real event impossible of much improvement in that direction. Eighteen-year-old maidens, with escorts of like or greater age, held the center of the stage until Mary arrived. Conversation was indulged in, as he had expected, but it was not the main diversion of the evening. Dancing was the chief attraction. This did not simplify matters for Hewitt; rather, it complicated them, for, if anything, he danced with less ease than he talked on such occasions. He had taken lessons in Chicago, he remembered, when he wanted to be more than usually unhappy. He had struggled, but primarily he did not conceive of man as a dancing animal. Confronted by the "open house" as a function where one danced, he quailed. His position was difficult. If he danced, Mary would discover, and greet with the disdain such a performance merited, his deficiencies as a dancing-man. If he refused, she would think he was the canary who could sing but would not do so.

The mothers of the eighteen-year-old girls were distributed in chattering groups throughout the house and upon the wide, vine-covered veranda. There was a sprinkling of fathers. Evidently this was to be a conspicuously large "open house." Groups already

strolled out toward the rustic summer-house with its Japanese lanterns, wandered through the house, or sat on rustic seats. The affair would begin early and last till a late hour.

Everything must come to an end in time, however, mused the philosopher-by-necessity, at eight-thirty.

Mary's vivacity increased in proportion as they approached the house.

"Hello, dears!" she called to the nearest of the talking groups of grown-ups. "Having a good time?"

"The children are," replied Mrs. Lombard.

"I hope none of them heard you say 'children'! Hewitt, you know every one up here?"

Hewitt thought, without being sure of anything except his growing discomfiture, that he did.

Music from a saxophone and a piano, with an accompaniment of trap-drums, broke forth from the inner regions. The dancers hastened inside.

"Hello, Mary! So glad you came and that you've brought Mr. Stevenson," Margaret Hawtrey called to them.

"I want the next, Mary," came from the trees.

"Who is it?"

"Morgan."

"You do dance, don't you?" Mary turned to say to Hewitt.

He had not decided whether to tell the whole truth or half a truth. Thus he hesitated, and the usual happened.

"Come, then! You must dance with some of the younger girls after this one. You'll like them. They're dears. Margaret is to enter Wellesley. You'll have something in common. Now do be nice and sociable."

Hewitt did n't feel sociable. He felt stiff. He was sorry he had not said a final and emphatic "No," when asked whether or not he danced. This would have made him an attendant on the mothers or free to smoke in a chair far from the maddening crowd of habitués. At the crucial moment his courage had failed. He must again pay for a lack of skill, this time to say the half-true "No." Well, he would dance around once with Mary and then, before she could introduce him to the young girls he was willing to take her word for as being nice, retire into the all-enshrouding darkness, once she had been put safely into the hands of his rival, Morgan. Much as he feared and hated Morgan's monopoly of Mary, Hewitt would do this. He loved Mary well, but his comfort better.

Mary led him into the brilliancy of the lighted parlors where the saxophone orchestra held forth in raucous tones so fascinating to the dancer. The "eighteens" and their partners were engrossed in their own rhythmical movement, but not to the exclusion of Mary. They had hardly begun to dance before her presence was noted.

"Hello, Mary!" called Tom Brandon. "I want a dance with you."

Hewitt was then introduced to Tom, while the two couples danced along together.

"I suppose you know you are dancing with the best dancer in town," Tom told him in friendly fashion.

"I judged that," Hewitt managed to say.

He had never been more miserable in his life. His knees were enormous wooden balls-and-sockets which were permanently out of order. Despite his large, awkward movements, his stiffness of back, his blurred-ness of brains, however, they were moving with a smoothness which must have been deceiving to spectators. Mary made this deception possible. She danced for three. He would have known it by her silence, had he been ignorant of his inability to do the necessary things in this branch of accomplishment. She did not speak after they had talked to Tom Brandon. She probably had no breath for speech. She was consuming large amounts of energy, Hewitt felt.

To Hewitt, the rooms through which they danced were a swirl of blinding light, flickering with blurs of color that were girls and streaks of black that were men. All the world glided, laughing and talking, through the intricate steps of the dance. They were masters of this art. Only Hewitt watched his step and, in the very act of watching, lost the slight mechanical dexterity he had developed at that far distant dancing-school and groped for the next move. Mary followed with remarkable skill, considering her difficulties.

At the door, after having gone once around, Hewitt stopped and drew Mary into the friendly semi-darkness of the veranda. He was hot and miserable.

"Why did you bring me to this thing?" he confronted her with, as he led her down the steps to the lawn.

"I had an engagement with you, did n't I? After I made it, Margaret wanted me to come to her 'open house.' It's quite informal. Your coming is perfectly proper, even though Margaret did n't know you socially," she explained, with a gentleness he had no right to expect. In the shadow of the trees she lost her vivacity, he noticed.

"Some one else asked you to come!" he went on less angrily, but still emphatically wishing himself out of it.

"What if some one did? Other people have the right to ask me to go to an 'open house,' Hewitt."

He looked down sulkily at the ground

"I'm sorry you had to come with me."

"I'm not. So why should you be?" She touched his arm appealingly.

"But it's hard on you to have to dance with me."

"You dance very well. Don't decide you do it badly, for goodness' sake! That ruins anybody for dancing."

"I'm not a dancing man."

"Then you must become one. This is no age for a recluse. Do everything, and do everything well."

"That's the way you do things."

"I try to be decently proficient in the things everybody does. But come up to the house. You must dance with some of the young girls. And *talk!* Act interested in yourself and in them. You *must.*"

"I'm not interested in myself to-night."

"Then pretend to be."

Still miserable, Hewitt was led to the slaughter. The dancers were streaming out into the air. He was introduced to a great many of them, without hearing their names. They swarmed about Mary — millions of them, it seemed to him. How could a man remember a million names, even if he heard them when they were pronounced? He finally sat down, because the other men in the group did, on the steps of the veranda. Mary turned her attention to Margaret Hawtreys and Bob Dillings. She parried laughing insults from Harvey Lombard, who was allowed out with everyone to-night on account of the intimacy between his family and that of the hostess. Hewitt pondered over Harvey's gay bantering. Why not be in bed, where comfort lay? Caste three asks only that you let your fountain of joy flow when in its midst, but Hewitt had no fountain of joy.

At the beginning of the next dance Mary disappeared on the arm of Arthur Morgan. When the group of which Hewitt was a non-existent portion had broken up into pairs, he was left alone on the steps. The movement which he made in getting off the steps and out in the direction of the dimly lighted summer-house, where the darkness was deeper, may

be best described as "slinking." Slinking had become Hewitt's ideal mode of locomotion. It meant evading the horrors of being social. It meant a beginning of freedom for thought. It meant temporary peace, which would be lengthened into three hours of peace at the slightest opportunity.

He lighted a cigarette and slunk into the darkness. He inhaled the blessed air of evening, unpolluted by talk about the "great issues." He gazed at the quiet stars. Peace dipped in its flight through space and sat upon his shoulder.

Not for long did it stay there, however.

Fathers were about. Hewitt encountered two of them. They observed him and spoke to him. The ends of their cigars alternately darkened and glowed. One of them scanned his face as best he could.

"I guess I don't know you, young man. I'm Carl Hawtrey. This is Mr. Lombard."

"Hewitt Stevenson, sir." He shook their proffered hands.

"Come back with us. You don't want to miss this dancing. Ladies must be taken care of. It strikes me, Lombard, that the lads are n't so attentive as we used to be. Eh?"

That left Hewitt in a position where courtesy made demands.

"I think no one's being left out this dance," he said, but nevertheless started to accompany them to the house. "I believe there are some extra young men."

"You ought to be showing the old ladies a good time, then. Somebody has to make up for our rheumatic incapacity. Eh, Lombard?" He laughed heartily, a laugh in which Hewitt could not join.

Mr. Lombard agreed with everything Mr. Hawtrey said, giving nods which sent his cigar into a glow again.

So it was that at the beginning of the next dance Hewitt was standing with the two fathers at the steps, his cigarette cast aside, his arm hanging over the railing, his manner heavy. Further misery was imminent, and he was not man enough to meet it with the manner debonnair.

Mary Young had passed with her escort, all elasticity and joy. They were even now running across the lawn together in pursuit of Margaret and Bob Dillings. A lump took its place permanently in Hewitt's throat. He, too, wanted to be gay, but he remained lumpier than before.

Once again the dancers went into the house. Margaret Hawtrey was standing beside her mother when the last couple strolled in. Duty called, and duty's demands were reinforced by the presence of two fathers.

"May I have this one?" Hewitt asked Margaret, coming upon her so suddenly that she started. It had been necessary for him to hurry, to strike while his resolution remained hot.

"I should *love* to dance with you," she said, in the

stereotyped extravagant form used by all the progeny of caste three.

Hewitt talked. Margaret smiled at him and exchanged repartee with passing couples. Evidently he was not convincing as a speaker on trivial subjects. He decided this before the dance was half over, and relapsed into painful silence which would have been unnoticed had he been in full control of his pedal extremities. He reddened with increasing splendor about the ears. All visible parts of him reddened.

As soon as Margaret guessed from this flag of distress that he was uncomfortable, she turned all her batteries of pleasantry into play and saved the day. When the music stopped she swept him to a choice seat and talked exclusively to him about books. She had heard Mary say that he was intellectual; therefore she confined herself to intellectual subjects.

"Do you like Longfellow?" she asked, wide-eyed. She looked very pretty, Hewitt thought.

"One does n't *like* Longfellow in this day, I believe," he said, with a great show of thinking hard. "One tolerates him, I should say."

"Oh!" she said, astonished and saddened. "Is n't it — nice to like him?" To like something it was n't "the thing" among the best people to like was incomprehensible to Margaret.

"Well, it is 'nice' to like any one who appeals to *you*," Hewitt was quick to add. "You must follow your own taste. I was only expressing my opinion."

"Oh!" This time the "Oh" was one of relief.

"What poems of his do you admire?" he asked.

"Oh, the ones every one admires," was her indefinite reply.

"You see,"—Hewitt leaned back and felt almost comfortable for a few minutes,—“Longfellow is rather second-rate, according to our standards. He was n't great enough. Narrative poetry is in disrepute, anyway. The novel has entirely taken its place. Poetry is going in the same direction as art. There's a tendency to write pure emotion, if you understand that.”

She gazed at him, with her wide eyes questioning.

"That's very interesting," she said, smiling. "Thank you for telling me. I don't read much. You do, don't you?"

"Yes, I suppose I read more than most men. That's rather my line. It's not just books, you see. People think that. A book is n't worth anything unless it is art or contains ideas. I am interested in science myself.”

"Are you going away to school?"

"To Chicago.”

"I'm going to Wellesley. Susannah Connors—you have n't met her have you?—and her mother are in New York. She's been at Smith this year. Several of the girls here are going to Smith, but mother and I chose Wellesley.” She smiled at him again.

This was much better. Hewitt was almost enjoying himself.

Mary was inside the house. Her voice floated out

to Hewitt just as he made this decision about his feelings. Instantly his content fled. He wondered if she would continue to amuse herself with the natives, and leave him to himself and young women who said they admired Longfellow.

"There are schools which fit our needs," he began again to Margaret. "Chicago stands for science. I suppose Smith has something particularly good about it, and Wellesley, too."

"Mother and I liked the catalogue's description of it," Margaret replied. "Then we met such a nice girl, while we were East last summer, who had been there. If Susannah Conners were going back to Smith, I would go with her. But she is n't. She has n't been well, and her mother thinks of bringing her back to Alston next winter. So perhaps I won't even go to Wellesley. Susannah will hate not to go, but Aunt Jean — she is n't really my aunt, but everyone here calls her that — Aunt Jean always has her way about Susannah."

Mary, in the house, was being jolly to five people at once. Each thought she was being nice to him or her personally, since she wasted as much attention on the girls as on the men. Mary was incomparable! Hewitt often thought of the fact gleaned from psychology, that a memory of past successes is essential to one's self-confidence. Mary must have an entire book of past successes in her memory. She was the center of every circle. No wonder caste three wanted her at their parties, even the younger sets. She toned

up a party, gave it zest. No dull moments existed around Mary. They scurried away into dark corners when she appeared.

Hewitt listened to Mary and forgot to be thankful to Margaret for playing the attentive hostess to him, — for that must be why she was pretending this great interest in books. He began wishing that Mary would come out and lay her hand on his head.

“I think so,” he was saying to Margaret, in answer to a question. He wondered what the question had been.

Three Hewitts were present at the Hawtreys’ “open house.” Three Hewitts were present wherever one dragged them during these days. They were very interesting for an introspective mind to watch. He got some pleasure out of observing them, but he would have preferred peace.

There was the Hewitt who was abjectly in love with Mary Young. This one spent much time in yearning for a word or a look to show that she continued to single him out as a recognized loyalist worthy of her love. This Hewitt was generally present when Mary stood out as the most attractive woman in a group. He cried out for her to display her affection not only to the public, but to the other two Hewitts who sat critically taking notes on her, ready to emerge into the light when the time was propitious and express themselves in no mild terms. This Hewitt would have sold his soul for a sign of deep and sincere feeling from Mary. This was the Hewitt who spent miserable

hours at night with the knowledge that he was only twenty-one and an incident to Mary.

The second Hewitt was the one who in Chicago had been in permanent domination of all other Hewitts, one who was enormously interested in books, because books stood for ideas. This was Hewitt the intellectual, or the embryonically intellectual. He was the Hewitt whom Letsky had delighted and stimulated with his radicalism, who loved the world because it held other minds as keen or keener than his own, and who loved argument. This second Hewitt pounced upon foreign thought, loved France because it contained the Paris of literature and art, handed a laurel wreath to the Germany of philosophic thought, adored England with a great fervor, because it was the land that had fostered the traditions he had been reared upon. This was the Hewitt who, in his youth, would have been the happy companion of the wise, and who would have been the enemy of all intellect, except his own, in maturity. This was Hewitt the would-be thinker.

But there had crept up during the last month a disgusting third Hewitt who hated and cherished hate, a disagreeable *Mr. Hyde* among Hewitts, who showed his fangs at a world which did not take him seriously enough nor gave him what he wanted — which was praise for being the second Hewitt — who snarled at a world which contained a Mary who valued others more than she did him. A veritable ogre was this Hewitt. He excreted emphatically at Alston, spat in rage at a town which neither patronized nor under-

stood the things of the mind, but was willing to condescend to those who pretended they understood, if these, lacking wealth and the prestige of acting according to all rules of caste three, wished to be condescended to. The second Hewitt tried in vain to convince this third one that Alston was only a child interested in finding out trivial but exciting items about itself and a material world which was being liberal with these followers of hardy pioneers. Alston in time would grow up into a fair maturity that was convinced of other values. The ogre Hewitt thrust reason aside. Spitting was fun and necessary to his existence. Otherwise one swallowed the venom and was poisoned. One must not repress hate.

Even more efficacious than Alston in arousing hate in this third Hewitt was Mary the hoarder of scalps, the vampire, the non-intellectual, the fraud who pretended to value other standards than did her associates, but was really the slave of convention,—a Mary, indeed, among the Marthas of his former ideals! She had let him approach near enough to see the wonders of her love. Then she had wanted him to forget. The novelty was no longer a novelty; it could be discarded. But reaction and an unexpected stickiness on the part of a boy who showed signs of being hurt by this discarding had brought him into partial favor again — until that note about mud. That had relieved Mary of further effort to be kind to Hewitt. But he had not accepted the ultimatum. He had been stricken with repentance. She *might* forgive. He

was a good trophy, one of the most susceptible she had ever dealt with, and since she could neglect him when she chose, she had not cast him into outer darkness as she might another offender or another doubter of the divine right of woman, according to the romantic ideal of love. She had not cast Hewitt out; she had equivocated with a "perhaps."

The third Hewitt loathed Mary Young with an awful loathing, because she had deprived him of his self-respect. He had not been strong enough to resent in action that first casting-off. This bitter self became drunk with power when Mary took unusual pains to be sympathetic and kind, and it hurled reproaches on her for being herself. After all, that was what all the Hewitts must conclude at last — Mary was only being herself. She was the self she had been during a million years of her existence in a world of men and women who seized the necessities, plucked off the luxuries, and amused themselves in the leisure which possessions gave them. She was very old in her knowledge of the world. She "knew the game," as Reed had said. She was hard, but she was wonderful.

Mary's voice, which still floated to him from where she sat entertaining five others inside, drew the first Hewitt to the surface. He wished the next dance, which would take a very kind but boresome Margaret off his hands, would come. He wanted to run in to Mary, take her out into the darkness, and hear her voice, spoken only for him. He wanted to look at

her eager face—if she would only remain as eager for him as she did for the others—and prove his subjection.

The saxophone blared its invitation. Hewitt arose, excused himself to Margaret, and hurried away into the house. Mary was standing with her hand thrown over Bob Dillings' shoulder, ready to dance. Hewitt came up behind her.

"Mary," he said, trying to make his voice sound like the voice of others who asked her to dance, "may I have the next one?"

"Five are promised ahead, Hewitt. Wait, Bob!" She drew away from her partner and took Hewitt's arm. "I want you to dance with Katherine Miller's sister. She just came in. She's sweet!"

Against his will Hewitt did so. He endured the annoyance of trying to dance as blithely as Bob Dillings, while he hated it, and of talking, when he had no desire to do anything but get away from all this. Toward the end of the evening Mary and Bob came and sat with them, and Mary arranged the next few dances for Hewitt. He endured that, too, in silence, and at length begged for one with her later.

"You did n't ask me to save it," she said, smiling her old intimate smile at him and putting her hand over his on the railing in the darkness. "I've promised ahead all we'll dance to-night. I'm sorry."

There are degrees of torture. The nth degree was what Hewitt suffered at the "open house," an institution supposed to entertain people. But, as he had

thought philosophically,—before forgetting to remain philosophical,—everything must end in time. Somewhere in the vicinity of midnight Mary came to him to be taken home.

She was tired, and was glad to go. One is not unobtrusively the center of a group of eighteen-year-old boys and girls. One remains eager and clever endlessly, but one gets hopelessly tired. Hewitt had concealed his hatred for the "open house" as a social gathering in which he took a disagreeable part, but his mask was never so impenetrable nor so well-adjusted as Mary's. It slipped when he had opened the door for her at the Trimbles' and stood waiting to say good-night to her.

"Why did n't you dance with me after the first one?" he demanded fiercely, his load of misery that had been gathering weight all the evening finding voice at last.

"I did n't think you wanted to dance with me," Mary said, but she did not carry out this pretence as she intended. She had played bridge all the morning and golf all the afternoon. Her fingers were not quick enough to hide the yawn that rushed to her lips. "Now you may run on to your fairer gardens. Hewitt," she said. "Mud is tiresome, isn't it? Even buttercups don't conceal that fact. Buttercups are such a common flower, anyway. You will love all those younger girls when you learn to know them better." She held out her hand to him. "Good-night."

Caught in the meshes of an overwhelming helplessness, Hewitt gazed at the fingers which she held out. He did not take them. He seemed fascinated by them.

Mary dropped her hand and opened the door. With her fingers on the knob, she paused.

"Good-night," she said again.

The third self in Hewitt brushed its brothers aside.

"Close that door!" he commanded sharply, pulling it shut for her. "I want to talk to you. You've made a fool of me. I'm tired of being rolled into a flat ribbon by the steam-roller of your colossal selfishness. *I'm* the mud! I've known from the beginning that I was mud under your feet. Your little feet have trampled so many men that one more or less does n't count! You laugh afterward, while they writhe. That's the kind of woman you are! You led me to think you were the beautiful person I wanted to think you were. You were full of fine sympathy for my poor plans to be better than the world around me. I know I'm a fool! You've proved that to me. I wrote poetry to you — silly poetry that I thought expressed something of what you meant to me! You charmed me with your pretty ways. I thought you were a woman to be worshipped. I put you upon a high pedestal and bowed down to you. I'm only twenty-one. Don't mention that to me! I *know* I'm only twenty-one. But my twenty-one is older, in some ways, than Tom Brandon's thirty. You know that. Thinking and knowing is what

makes a man old or young. And I've done more thinking in my twenty-one years than Tom Brandon or any of his kind will do in their entire lives. I'm not throwing bouquets at myself. I know what I'm talking about, I've lived within myself for a long time. I suppose I'm a kind of hermit, and that I'm not used to the light, airy ways of your friends. I've always been deadly serious. I take things hard. When I like people, I like them forever. As you have said, I don't like many people. But when I select, I choose for good and all — forever! I'm mad about you. I loved you from the first. You were different from any one I had ever known. You seemed so — so unprejudiced and open-minded and clever. But, more than that, you were so interested in the things I love better than life itself. You were wise and kind; and sometimes I think kindness is better than wisdom itself. Maybe that's because I am a weakling, afraid of people who get what they want, no matter who's hurt. I would have done anything for you! I would have sold my soul, like *Faust*. I crawled on the ground when I thought I had misjudged you. I lay awake at night, when I felt you had become bored with me, thinking up ways to win back your interest. I — I've cried at night over you! I realized I was only a little part of your life — so small that I could disappear without your noticing it. I've wanted to die, so that you would come and stand over me with tenderness in your eyes,— the way you looked at me once or twice before you had taken all

you wanted of me. I wish I were dead to-night! You've taken away all the interest I used to have in myself! Nothing counts now but you, Mary!" He leaned closer, so that his eyes blazed into hers. "And now, to-night, you fling that note into my face, that note about mud! I wrote that note because you maddened me. I love you! Day and night I think about you. You go 'round and 'round in my mind, when I try to think. I can't read poetry any more. I can't even keep you out of my science. Nothing matters any more, except you. And now you tell me I can 'go on to fairer gardens.' There *are* no fairer gardens. There are no other gardens in the world! All the rest of the world is only ashes in my mouth. Nothing makes any difference to me, except you! But I'm done with you—to-night! You'll never again call me with your devilish, intimate voice, and have me answer. I'm through! No, I'm not quite through. I'm going to kiss you. I've not dared to do that for months, poor fool that I am! You have n't been worth a minute of devotion. I'm mad! I know it!"

Hewitt took her in his arms, while Mary fought, helpless before the strength his fury gave him. He kissed her again and again. He hurt her with his strong hold. In the end she stopped fighting against him and lay inert, her eyes closed.

The heaviness of her relaxed body brought Hewitt to his senses. He released her so suddenly that she fell back against the door, where she stood looking

at him with puzzled, horror-stricken eyes. There was surprise in her eyes, too.

He leaned his forehead against the cool wood of the door-casing, and his arms hung limply at his sides. His mouth twitched, and tears rolled down his cheeks. Gradually the sight of his emotion changed her wonder to something like pity. She touched his arm.

"Hewitt!" Mary said gently.

"Hewitt!" she repeated, when he did not move.

He looked at her, his face twitching.

They stood looking at each other for a long time, while a breeze crept stealthily through the night, waving the vines hanging from the veranda pillars and ruffling their hair. Hewitt appeared weak and exhausted. He leaned forward at last, and then straightened himself.

"Sit down on the steps," Mary said. "We must talk."

He sat down, looking dazedly at the trees on the lawn, with his chin on his hands.

"Hewitt," Mary began, sitting beside him so that her arm touched his, "I am sorry."

He glanced quickly around at her, and then resumed his contemplation of the trees.

"I did n't know you felt this way."

"I told you that I loved you."

"Most boys would n't have taken it so hard. You are different, I suppose. Most young men love and get over it."

Hewitt shook his head. She went on:

"I did n't understand. I thought you were like the others. I was sorry afterward that I let you kiss me that night the lights went out. But I did like you. I am interested in you." And then, after a little silence, "I did n't want to hurt you."

"Not lately," returned Hewitt. "You have n't been interested in me. You never were, after the first few weeks. I was strange, and when I stopped being that, and you saw that I was just an ordinary person, you wanted no more of me. It made me sick — the day you and Katherine Miller came in and you only asked as an afterthought how I was feeling." His voice was weak. "I felt that if only I had been like Joe Bales, you would have gone on being interested. But I'm only a reader. I'll never be like those other men."

"You are a great deal more than a reader of books. I don't know —" Mary stopped. "I don't know why you thought I had lost interest in you."

They were silent while the breeze ruffled their hair again. The night was very still; the street was dark. A light in the house across the way went out,—the last in the neighborhood. The echo of a clanging street-car down-town came to them through the silence. A man lurched by, paused to hold on to the iron fence next door, and then tottered on.

Mary held out her hand for Hewitt to take. He held it tightly in both of his.

A faint stir in the bushes drew their attention for a moment, but it passed.

"I wish you were older, dear," she said after a long pause.

"I am twenty-one."

But Mary shook her head.

"I am twenty-seven," she said. "I wish you were my son," she added, with a touch of emotion.

Hewitt had to smile at this remark.

"I wish I had a baby, Hewitt. You see I'm the kind of woman who never marries. Men don't want to marry me,—except very young ones," she added to stop his protest. "There have to be some women left, I suppose, to amuse people. I do amuse people. That is why they like me. That's the way I earn my way. I am hard, so people who don't like me say. Do you think I have n't any feeling, Hewitt?"

"I have thought that you did n't," he returned quietly.

"Sometimes I, too, think I have n't. All the feeling I ever had I have fought down. People don't want to see your heart. They just want to be amused. They prefer you hard and bright. Then you are clever; you amuse them."

Her fixed gaze was calm when Hewitt turned to look at her. His first thought—that an unhappy love-affair had brought her to this point of view—he knew to be wrong. She was not sad because people wanted her to amuse them; there was no tragedy here. She was merely speaking of a course she had chosen for herself.

"But sometimes I think it is too bad I can't be

married and have a baby," Mary continued. "Some people think a woman's right to have children ought to allow her to have them out of wedlock. That would make society impossible, of course. No, I would n't do that. I like to be with people too well. I shall never have a baby, Hewitt. Perhaps if I had one, I would n't love it at all. Sometimes I can't love anything. The power seems to come and go with me."

"I know," he said. "I realized that was how you were acting with me."

Mary frowned.

"Are n't people queer, Hewitt?"

"All of us," he replied gloomily.

"I should like to love everybody. I want everybody to love me." He felt now that she had stopped idealizing herself, even to herself, and was trying to be frankly truthful. "I love admiration and attention. I suppose we all do. But with me it's an obsession. I have always been that way. I try to make people in general love me, not only the men. I spend tons of energy a month trying to make them love me. Sometimes it's not hard. But then, when I am sure of them, I want to make new ones like me."

Hewitt understood.

"Hewitt, if you could only go on loving me, dear, and not mind the gaps in my affection! I am just myself. Emotion is hard to guide. Because I love you one day is no surety that I will the next. Sometimes I love — well, the 'Joe Bales' kind of man.

And at other times I love your kind. That is the kind of woman I am."

She smiled, with an attempt to erase the nearness to sentiment of her speech, but the smile faded before the odd intensity of Hewitt's expression.

"I love so many people," Mary concluded, "and never all of them at the same time."

Hewitt stood up and stretched his arms over his head, as though he were making sure they would work at his command. Mary arose, too. He drew her close to him and examined her face by the dim light before he kissed her.

"I can live on this for a long time," he said sadly. "You may love the 'Joe Bales' kind to-morrow, and I shall understand. I don't think I will get angry with you again. Maybe, when I go away from Alston, I can stop loving you."

"This has been worth all the torture," he said later, when he let her go. "I am glad I went mad." He laughed, and opened the door for her. "Good-night, Mary."

When he reached home Hewitt went softly to his room and undressed without turning on the light. He was still quiveringly wide-awake. He sat down on his bed. He felt as though his system had been cleared of a poison that had produced miseries and furies, a misery which was now dissolved in a vivid content. He was happier than he ever remembered to have been, even though he knew that to-morrow — no, not to-morrow; not so soon as that, but before

long — she would again be the old Mary and Hewitt a mere incident.

The third Hewitt was conquered, he thought. Love was just what you made it,—returned or tolerated. You could be happy with it if you chose. It should never again make a coward and a hater of him, so Hewitt told himself.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE third Hewitt was not dead, as he supposed, however. He was temporarily eliminated from the race, but he convalesced later, although he never did flourish as of old. Nevertheless, the evening upon which this ego suffered partial eclipse was not without its immediate effect upon the life of the composite person called Hewitt Stevenson. There are ways and ways of conquering old habits. Hewitt decided, while still under the influence of the ecstasy of that night when Mary had attempted explanation of herself, that to put Mary out of the center of his life would be a good move, a hard move, but a move worth the trouble. One needed a spiked German helmet to deal with walls such as lay between him and Mary, the wall of her intermittent interest, and Hewitt's distant Irish ancestry made a selection of such headgear improbable. His head was the kind likely to feel soft and bruised after an encounter with stone walls.

Being in love would n't be such a serious matter, if one had the hardihood to step out of it as though out of a fair but no longer useful garment, leaving it to lie in beautiful folds on the floor while one ran on. Not, however, to run to fairer gardens. There were no fairer gardens. (This was the morning after the

explosion and there was a consequent clearing of the air.) But there were other gardens or fields or what you will. At any rate, one must go on.

Books had lost their hold upon Hewitt. In these days they no longer offered the solace of the period before he had begun living according to Mary's ideas of what living should consist. Novels bored him. They were for people who were not ready to live, or for those whose living was in the past, a panorama to be contemplated through the revived emotions the novelist presented to one. Science seemed to require more concentration than he could bring to any labor. Mary remained a very disturbing element in his existence.

Hewitt decided that play was what he needed. He wished for some of that old care-free joy in existence which had been his on the farm and in Chicago, when he and Paul had taken jaunts to the parks and the Indiana sand-dunes and lakeside resorts. He had buried himself long enough in an emotion which alternately transfused itself into a heaven and a hell. He wanted back his youth's birthright.

Alston was a pleasant place, if one were not disgustingly critical. One man could not make over a community in a month or a year by finding fault with it. Words were inefficacious in such a situation, even if one were willing to dedicate oneself solely to the task of transforming Alston, Indiana, child of the Middle West, into something — Hewitt had no blueprints of an ultimate Alston,—more satisfactory to

the mind. Let well enough alone. In time it would become introspective and find itself.

Meantime, it might be a good thing for Hewitt to find *himself*.

The world, he decided, was an immense horn of plenty, Mr. Hardy and others both ancient and modern to the contrary notwithstanding. One could not pluck all the fruits. One must choose. One must pay.

This paying business was what bothered most people, especially the young of the species. They did not want to pay. They wanted to smile at the tall, stately, meagerly dressed lady holding the horn, and have her at once unload generously into their laps, made more capacious by the holding out of voluminous aprons fond mothers had made ample in the beginning. They wanted a great deal of juicy, luscious fruit, with no vegetables, and they did not want to pay for the fruit. One lost one's delicate taste if one labored for coin with which to pay. Fruits in variety and plenty were presented for choice. If one had a banana taste, which Hewitt did not,—he loathed bananas with an awful hatred, as food for train day-coaches on summer Sunday afternoons,—one picked out a banana and gave the lady holder-of-the-horn a penny or a dime, or whatever bananas were selling for. If one preferred pineapples, one also paid the current price. It was the same with grape-fruit, plums, figs, or any other fruit.

In August, 1913, Hewitt recognized that he had

been crying out for three kinds of fruit. He had wanted to be intellectual, to be social, and to have Mary Young exclusively to himself. He had already tested the quinine bitterness, combined with the satisfying firm tartness, of the grape-fruit of intellectualism. He knew that he liked grape-fruit; but then, a steady diet in youth, even of most delicious fruit, becomes tiresome if there is no variety. He would now sample figs, fresh figs. One often did not like them at first, he understood. He would try them again. And the price? The meagerly clad lady smiled enigmatically.

"You may pay for this fruit according to your means," she seemed to say. "The largest and best figs come high. We have, however, a medium-priced fig and a cheap fig. Which will you have?"

Hewitt was cautious because of his training in a work-a-day world and because of his experience with fruit-vendors in Chicago. He decided upon a medium-priced fig, and asked the price. The lady studied him. Then she whispered in his ear, causing him to start.

"Is that a meduim-priced fig?" he stuttered.

The lady smiled her affirmation, and he purchased, wondering whether it was worth the price. But Mary Young had to be defeated, the Mary who occupied his mind to the exclusion of all else.

As a result of this buying, one August evening found Hewitt, a fourth Hewitt who was determined to be like other people — by which he meant like Joe

Bales — and to enjoy the fleeting moments just as other people did, standing against the soda-fountain in Becker's cigar-store. His elbows rested on the marble and his feet were crossed. He was standing unabashed, at his ease, comfortable. At least, he looked that way.

In reality, Hewitt was introspecting and smiling inwardly. He knew that he wished he were in his room reading or continuing his conversation with Mr. Smith on socialism, which, naturally enough, Mr. Smith thought was all tommy-rot and akin to anarchy. But Hewitt was not the owner of grape-fruit.

He bought a "tin roof." This was not real property, but ice-cream decorated with chocolate syrup and peanuts in their brown skins. Hewitt hated it, but it was a popular concoction and he was willing to go the limit with figs. Becker's store sold hundreds of "tin roofs" a day. It was *the* thing in Alston.

Bob Hawtrey had just strolled in and was lighting a cigar across the room at the patent cigar-lighter. He blew out huge clouds of smoke and settled himself in a position similar to Hewitt's to watch the crowds going back and forth along Meridian Street to the picture-shows. Joe Bales came in. He began a cigarette before he noticed his former fellow-worker.

"Hello, Stevenson! Have a cigarette?"

"Thanks," said Hewitt, reaching for the silver case. He lighted it and watched it flicker up and down as he drew on it.

"Anything doing to-night?" he queried, with admirable ease.

"Date," said Joe. "Fix me a 'tin roof,' Cobb," he called to the white-jacketed boy at the fountain.

Silent puffing and eating followed.

"If you have a date you'd better get to it," put in Bob Hawtrey, without taking the trouble to glance at Joe. "It's eight-thirteen."

"I'm not in such a hurry. Helen has a guest, and I've got to entertain 'em both. So I should worry about hurry," Joe answered. "Say, Bob," he added, "why don't you come and have a date with that girl? She's from Fort Wayne. Good looking, too. Only going to be here a few days; so you need n't be afraid Helen'll rope you for another with her. Come on!"

"Can't. I'm going to the movies and then home to bed. I've been tearing 'round all week."

"Quitter!"

"That's right. I'm going to be in bed by nine-thirty. Here goes now for the show." He was at the door, when voices coming in at the back from the pool-room caused him to stop.

"Hello, boys," he said.

"Heard about Tom Brandon?" called one.

"No; what?"

"Arrested in Chicago for speeding. A big fine."

"Mary won't go to Indianapolis so often," said another, with a slight sneer.

"Mary who?"

"Mary Young. I saw them at the 'Claypool' on

Monday night. They 're down there so often that —" He shrugged, and turned to buy a cigar.

Bob frowned.

"Soft pedal, you boob! You want to keep off the subject of a girl like Mary Young in a place like this." He glanced quickly at Hewitt, who was gazing out the window and trying to remain unaware of the fiery red that was surging into his face and neck.

"Shut up!" Bob finished.

"You know," continued the other, inferring that he did not.

"I ought to."

"All right. You know," persisted the other.

Hewitt's face continued to blaze. He hoped they did not notice, since this was not the eighteenth century when men ran other men through for such innuendo as that. He was relieved when Bob and three of the newcomers went across the street toward a moving-picture show. Joe had finished his "tin roof" and was buying more cigarettes. When he had flung his money on the counter, he turned to Hewitt.

"Say, Stevenson, you took Mary Young over to the Hawtreys the other night, did n't you?"

Hewitt nodded.

"She's a fine girl. She's too firm here to be hurt by what a cigar-store loafer says about her. Tom's tough as the king of spades, but everybody knows what Mary is."

Hewitt dropped his crossed foot and strolled toward the door. That swine of a George Rowe! Eleanor

Rowe's brother! Lots of business he had to be casting sneers at Mary Young! So this was what figs brought him to — listening to slander against Mary in a corner cigar-store! He had his hand on the screen-door, preparatory to taking back figs to the stately lady who had let him buy them without trying to persuade him that they were not worth the price, when Joe caught him by the arm in a friendly grasp. "Why don't you come and have that date, Stevenson? Helen told me to get somebody. Come on! I did n't think about your caring for girls before."

Hewitt hesitated. Should he walk out into the country and continue his psalm of hate against a town that would house and be friendly with a swine like Rowe, or should he give the figs a further chance?

"All right, I'll go," he said finally.

Hewitt continued to pay for his chosen fruit. He endured the agony of remaining nonchalant under the critical scrutiny of Helen Baxter and her guest. He talked and laughed; he chattered and made jests. The guest admired him to Helen when they went into the house to get their hats, preparatory to going downtown.

"Awfully good looking and clever, is n't he?" she whispered.

"I did n't suppose he was so lively. Mary Young says he is awfully brilliant," Helen told her.

If figs could only be paid for all at once, Hewitt groaned within himself! This constant drain of talk! This unceasing interest in passing trivialities! This

mirthful jesting with a girl you mentally put down as a high school light-weight who caught only half your subtleties and then mangled them! How wonderful Mary was! She *was* an intellectual. Compared with this girl from Fort Wayne, she was a Madame de Stael, a George Eliot among women! He had needed this, he decided, to make him entirely appreciative of Mary. It was the death rattle of the third Hewitt, as it were. And then he remembered that he was doing this to forget Mary.

In the semi-darkness of the movie-house they fumbled blindly for seats, and at length found four into which they crowded. They went in front of a fat man and his fat wife, who widened the space between her knees, but did not get up.

"Heavens!" moaned the girl from other parts. "I nearly killed myself getting by that woman's knee."

"Want a bandage?" Hewitt laughed, presenting her with his handkerchief.

"No. I turned my ankle, I think. It hurts awfully!"

"Use the handkerchief to weep into, then; I won't care if you do get it wet." Hewitt felt ridiculous saying such things, but his sally brought a smile from the girl.

The strange thing about the whole affair was that by the time they started into the drug-store "to eat," as Joe put it, he began to like being social. Hewitt managed that entire part of the programme, even to drawing out the chairs for the girls and conducting the

selection of food. Joe had stopped at the door to speak to some girls who confronted him.

"Where's Joe?" Helen pouted.

"You're losing him," her guest assured her, and threw a little wink at Hewitt.

"I'm always losing him. I've lost him weekly for years. Joe and I have the most irregular 'case' in Alston. Sometimes we're on, but generally we're off. He's had a dozen other cases since we started ours in high school."

"And you?" Hewitt questioned.

"So have I," she admitted, smiling.

More "tin roofs" seemed to be in order, although Hewitt drew the line on permanently entering the roof-contracting business, as he put it with splendid success.

When Joe re-entered the group Hewitt felt *de trop*, because the three talked about a dance which he did n't know anything about, but he refused to allow himself the pleasure of introspection and kept firmly to the artificial action he was demanding of himself.

While the four were in earnest consultation over the best way to spend the remainder of the evening, the Pattons and Mary Young came in, and before Hewitt had time to wonder at Mary's apparently unescorted condition, Tom Brandon followed them and sat down at their table.

What the four of which Hewitt formed a part did during the remainder of the evening suddenly became unimportant. Mary nodded to him and smiled with

her normal eagerness. She wore a corsage of yellow daisies, a queer cultivated variety, combined with some fluffy blue flowers. The whole rested against the background of her old-blue dress.

"That's a good-looking dress of Mary Young's, is n't it?" Helen Baxter commented in a low tone.

"Beloved of Stevenson's heart," added Joe, with a sly wink at Hewitt.

The assumed brilliancy of the social, as represented by Joe and his female companions, dimmed and became dullness to Hewitt, who was ashamed to watch the table where Mary sat, yet was unable to keep his thoughts away from it. He recognized that if Mary had been in his place, she would have given attention to Helen and Joe and the Fort Wayne girl to the exclusion of all else. Part of the charm Mary had for so many people was due, no doubt, to this faculty for being irreproachably interested in the group of which she was a member. Rules again. She never let even the fringes of her mind be concerned with others.

Hewitt tried not to make his smile wistful as he passed Mary in going out, but something of that element must have been in it, for she held his eyes for a second and tried, so he thought, to remind him that there was a bond between them, an intimate knowledge of each other which she could never have in common with those whom she only amused. A ripple of fresh emotion enveloped Hewitt. It was as though a veil

between them had been rent and they had looked into each other's souls.

When he left Joe on the corner of Eleventh Street at eleven-thirty, Hewitt's thoughts flew swiftly back to Mary. He rehearsed a dozen times her entrance into the drug-store, her bright nod to him, the wave of her hand, that look she had given him as he went out. She had not forgotten yet. She did love him in her own way. She was a rare woman from whom any kind of affection must be welcomed and cherished.

Presently his memory of her became hot with George Rowe's sneering remark in the cigar-store. Was she duping him into thinking there was no one who counted, with every one held at the same arm's length, while she gave to only one? A red mist blew before his eyes and blinded him, but he turned his fury against George Rowe. The dirty worm! It could n't be true! She was too fine for that! Yet did he expect her to tell him, at twenty-one, that her worldly relations were even more complicated than he had even in his darkest moments imagined? It could n't be true. Joe had said that Mary was too firm in Alston to be hurt by what a cigar-store loafer said about her, and Joe knew. Then why did she associate with a man like Tom Brandon? He was patently a weakling. Money did n't destroy that fact. But Hewitt had no sooner asked the question than it answered itself. Tom Brandon's position in Alston, despite his being "as tough as the king of spades,"

was indisputably sound. He could have committed anything short of murder without endangering it. He was the pet of caste three. Mary would have smiled and turned away, if she had heard George Rowe's insinuations. She would not even have been angered.

His father was sitting on the porch, with his feet on the railing, when Hewitt reached home. He was leaning back in a rocking-chair, and the reflection from the corner street-light played upon his face. He looked tired. He sat up with a start when his son stepped near his chair, and he blinked like an owl in the light.

"What's the matter, Father?"

"Nothing. I don't seem to sleep very good lately," his father said, with an attempt at briskness.

"Anything wrong?"

"No; I just don't sleep good. I'm tired out all the time. I'm just dead all the time. I don't have any 'pep,' as you boys say." He sank back and closed his eyes.

"Don't get sick," Hewitt said kindly. "Better come in and go to bed now. It's about twelve."

"I guess I'll sit up a while longer."

"Want me to stay down?"

"What for?" his father asked promptly.

"Oh, I thought I might sit down here and get a little sleepier myself. I'm pretty wide awake."

"You go to bed," was the command, issued with pronounced finality.

In a few days Mr. Stevenson went to bed and stayed

there. He did n't want a doctor. He was just "dead tired" and got "kind o' dizzy" when he stood up. He'd just stay in bed and get over it "right" before winter set in. This being August, Hewitt considered that his father was looking far ahead, but he remained silent and worried.

Why did n't his father have a doctor and find out what was the matter with him? There was no sense in this lagging around, weak and dizzy, letting nature take care of itself. Sometimes nature did a bad job in taking care of itself. Thus Hewitt expressed his worry to himself. He always grew angry when people did n't do what he thought they ought to do.

He conferred with Grace about it.

"I'm going to send for a doctor. I think father ought to have one," he declared.

Grace looked at him with that mixture of contempt and sympathy Hewitt remembered from other occasions when he had seemed inclined to burden himself with managing the household.

"Don't you send for a doctor. It won't do a bit of good. Father would n't let a doctor near him. You know that. It's not a bit of use bothering him. He's exactly like your grandfather, dead set in his ways. Just as soon as he gets so sick that he thinks he's going to die, he'll tell me to send for a doctor. Until then, it's no use."

It took three days in bed with the tired feeling to convince Charles Stevenson that a doctor might help him.

"Get a middle-aged one. I ain't going to have a young one experimenting on me. I don't want Crane. He did n't do anything for your grandfather. I won't have him."

Hewitt and Grace debated the matter and called in a middle-aged physician of authority. He pronounced the case one of typhoid fever and ordered a trained nurse.

Grace became frightened, and for the first time within Hewitt's memory grew hysterical. She ended by laying her head on his shoulder and sobbing violently, while Hewitt patted her on the back, because that was the way people, the feminine portion of people, were comforted in books, while he wondered what she would do if their father died. She would never go to Chicago to live, and how could she stay here? He was instantly ashamed of himself for projecting wonder so far into the future. His father was not going to die. He had typhoid fever. Well, other men had had typhoid and had recovered. The principal thing was good nursing, and he would have that.

Hewitt talked soothingly to Grace, his sympathy taking the form of "There! No use worrying!" "He'll be all right," "Come on, now, Grace. No use crying about it," and so on, with short phrases which proved nothing, but comforted Hewitt into thinking that at last he was important in his home. Grace dabbed at her eyes nervously, and presently went back to her father's room.

The nurse took full charge when she arrived. The

house became very quiet and full of the sick man. He dominated all else while he lay ill, growing thinner and thinner during the last of the summer.

Figs and grape-fruit were equally scorned during this period of his father's illness. At times Hewitt longed to talk to Mary, but he seldom saw her. It seemed to him that she must feel that after the night when they had understood each other there was no longer a reason for flattering him with her real or feigned attention and sympathy. She was very fond of him in her way. It was not Hewitt's way. She knew the depth of his love for her. Then why should they see each other? There was more amusement to be had with those whom one did *not* understand. The game was an exciting game — the social game — and Hewitt was not in a position to play it with one of Mary's experience. He was an opponent not worthy of her best weapons, and so he was not exhilarating to play with. She loved him in her way, but she did not care to play with him. The whole situation narrowed itself down to that.

Mary came into the store several times with Mrs. Patton or Ernestine or Katherine Miller. She always stopped to talk to Hewitt, and looked into his eyes with an expression which said that they understood, an expression which never lost its power of making him feel that a veil between their souls had been rent. He did not tell her about his father's illness. It would have been an item of insignificance to her. Besides, after a while the fact of having a sick father became

commonplace while he was at the store, as all events at first strange and terrifying become commonplace with long acquaintance. He grew accustomed to tip-toeing into the house, asking how his father was, and going to the door to look in at him where he lay white and thin in the big bed. He became accustomed to the stillness and the smell of medicine in the house. Then, sometimes for hours at a time, he forgot about his father, and once or twice he wished keenly that he would get well, so that he himself could eat figs again with Joe and his kind. Joe had asked Hewitt to have "dates" with girls in caste three on several occasions. His staying at home brought him back to his old habit of reading. Caste three did not often exist for him. Once or twice he wrote Mary a note which he did not send, a note full of his beloved figures of speech, but always beautiful figures now. The sea figure fascinated him. There were analogies in it which possibly she would not discern. That never-changing, for instance. Hewitt felt that sailors must have the same feeling of having irrevocably cast their lot with the sea as he had of being endlessly bound up with Mary, no matter what her attitude. And in time it might become unimportant whether or not she had an attitude toward him. His love for her would be too big an emotion to take into consideration such trifling personalities. His devotion would be limited not by her, but only by his own capacity for feeling.

This feeling possessed him when he had been reading poetry and was overflowing with reflected emo-

tion. Sometimes it seemed to him that he loved her more since he had formed his voluntary refusal to be disturbed by her. All the objectionable features in their relationship had faded away. He forgot that she was superficial, according to his former judgment, selfish, a devotee of the rules of caste three. He remembered vividly her tricks of gesture, the look from her eyes, her artistically smart clothing. Again she walked through his dreams in a mist of romance, a shrine at which he laid the essence of his spirit.

At other times Hewitt firmly decided that when his father became well again and he could do as he pleased, he would fling himself into the maelstrom of the younger society set and amuse himself as Mary did. He would drive her out of his heart by the sheer force of his concern with amusement. He could, if he chose, become as important to the young Alstonians as she was to the older ones.

Then a reaction of feeling made Hewitt certain that he wanted no one except Mary. The rhythm of emotion had set in.

CHAPTER XIX

IN the midst of the placidity which characterized his life after his understanding with Mary Young, a placidity which his worry over his father could not daunt, because his feelings were less wrapped up with his father than with Mary, Hewitt had moments of gnawing discontent with the flatness of existence. He wondered if it were n't better to be ecstatic and then miserable, than to live along on the planes of the unemotional. But even in the act of telephoning Mary, in order that he might again talk to her and be wracked by the pain of knowing that her interest in him was only subsidiary to more engrossing ones, a filling in of spare moments when caste three did not call, his determination to retain his independence conquered and he drew back into his shell. Hewitt rejected fire.

He went home one night during the latter part of August to find his father delirious. His cries, now faint and then piercing, filled the house. Grace was tense with fear, but mechanically, with tight lips that struck Hewitt as being grotesquely out of keeping with her white plumpness, she moved in and out of the sick-room, helping the nurse. She did not speak to Hewitt after she uttered one word "delirious!" to him as he entered the kitchen. He bit his lip and

leaned against the wall in the awkwardness of his youth. In a crisis at the store Hewitt would have been the last to lose his ability to cope with it, but at home, before Grace's mature contempt for his powers, he relapsed into helplessness. He ate the supper she set out for him on the scoured, linenless table, and then got up and stood looking out into the twilight, his hand on the door-casing.

When the doctor's voice came to him from the living-room, he turned and followed him out on the front veranda. When he was sure that Grace had returned to the bedroom where his father lay, Hewitt addressed the doctor.

"Just how bad is he, doctor?" he asked, taking his hand out of his pocket and trying to show his concern.

"He'll pull through, I hope."

Dr. Samson was a small man with a Van Dyke beard. His speech was so abrupt that if Alstonians had not known him to be a sterling doctor, he would have angered his patients and lost them. As it was, they expected short, sharp retorts to their questions. He never encouraged relatives. His "he'll pull through, I hope" was worth another doctor's "he's a well man."

"But he's pretty bad to-night, isn't he?" Hewitt persisted.

"He'll pull through." With that remark the doctor was off the porch and down the steps into his electric automobile. He glided away, and Hewitt returned his restless hands to his pockets.

He walked slowly back through the house to the kitchen-door again, and stood as before gazing into the gathering darkness. He could not decide what to do with himself. He ended by calling up Mrs. Chancellor and asking her to go back to the store in his place. "Father's pretty bad," he said shortly, and returned to the door again.

Grace came in after darkness had settled down. She was breaking ice, mashing it with a wooden weight.

"Let me do that," Hewitt said, starting toward her.

"I'll do it." Without another word Grace continued her work, and then went out.

The cries from his father's room had died down, but his voice came to Hewitt through an open window. It grew louder when Grace opened the door in passing in and out of the sick-room. He was talking fast, about something that had happened in his childhood. "Mother!" he screamed suddenly, and Hewitt, sitting on the back step leading down from the summer-kitchen, shuddered. What a hot, sultry night!

He walked around the house through the long grass. "Ought to be cut, this grass," he thought absently, kicking at it with his toes. He looked up at the sky, unstarred and blue-black with the presage of rain. He sat down on the front steps and watched a mass blacker than the expanse above rise slowly out of the east and cover the heavens. Vague rumblings, far away, broke the stillness.

"Guess it'll storm," he thought.

"Goodness, it's hot!" said Grace's voice behind him. "Maybe, if it'd cool off, father'd get better."

"Dr. Samson says he'll pull through," mused Hewitt, as though to himself.

"Goodness, it's hot!" repeated Grace, and he knew that she was passing the corner of her apron over her forehead.

He wished Grace would go back into the house and leave him. For some reason he resented her presence.

A louder rumble of thunder brought him to his feet. It startled him. He sat down again, angry with himself.

"I hope it does rain," said Grace, and came to the edge of the steps to examine the prospect. "I guess it will."

Fire flared up behind a mass of clouds in the east, bringing out their rounded outlines with distinctness. The thunder was louder this time, more disturbing. The windows in the old brick house rattled in unison with it.

Hewitt arose and shook himself. Grace went back into the house, and he felt relieved.

A breeze was creeping, as though reluctant to be there, through the tops of the trees along Jackson Street. Then a flurry of wind caught Hewitt squarely in the face, and he drew back, he could not have said why, under the doorway. A tree close by suddenly bent almost double, and in a moment stood quietly upright again.

The nurse, Hewitt saw, was standing just behind him. She was smiling. "I hope it cools off," she said pleasantly, and Hewitt again felt ashamed of the nervousness that had driven him back into the doorway. He walked to the railing to examine the sky.

Another gust of wind struck his forehead. The mass of clouds, higher now, again stood out black against a vivid flash of fire. The street-light on the corner went out with a noisy sputter, and the blackness around became opaque, thick enough to cut.

A steady wind blew against Hewitt's cheek, fanning his damp hair from his forehead and filling his lungs with fresh coolness. Drops of rain spattered at intervals, loud as hail-stones, on the roof of the porch, and presently the air was full of streaks of water blown as far as the door, cold and streaming water. Hewitt, backing into the house, heard the nurse going into his father's room, and presently he heard the bang of a dropping window up-stairs, where Grace was. The electric-light globe, hung by its long cord from the ceiling of the hall, swung backward and forward with clock-like regularity in the wind. A door upstairs slammed.

A dead silence, a silence that came to Hewitt as a pronounced relief, ensued in the house. There was not even a murmur from his father's bedroom. He went to the door and opened it carefully. The nurse, with her calm face, was sitting by the open window, her hands crossed in her lap, her face turned to catch the cool wind that blew into the room. A low light

burned on a marble-topped table near the bed. Dimly he saw his father stretched upon the white-covered bed, his head a form rather than a color.

The nurse rose and came toward Hewitt with her firm, quiet step.

"I think he will be better now," she said. "He has been quiet for several minutes. The crisis has probably passed."

"Dr. Samson said he would pull through," Hewitt murmured, just to say something.

"Yes," answered the nurse, and turned to pick up the clock from the table.

Hewitt stood for a few minutes, his eyes on his father's still face, while the nurse poured some medicine into a spoon and dropped it into a glass of water. Grace appeared in the doorway, her lips set permanently in a line that drooped at the corners, her reddish hair pulled back tight from her forehead and gathered into a large heavy knot at the back, a knot which gave the appearance of being precariously placed and at any moment likely to fall down her back into a heavy, ugly mass.

Hewitt turned to leave.

"You go to bed," Grace whispered to him as he passed, hardly opening her lips to form the words.

Hewitt did not answer her. He walked into the living-room and sat down with a book under the reading-lamp. But he could not follow the words. He was acutely aware of the whirl of driving rain outside, the pattering steps of Grace in the kitchen,

the swinging of the light in the hall. He closed the front door. The carpet was getting wet.

He went into the kitchen and confronted Grace with a touch of resentment.

"Look here, Grace," he said resolutely, keeping his voice lower, "I'm going to stay up myself to-night. You must go to bed. You've kept this up for weeks. There's no sense in it. You go to bed. I'm going to stay up myself."

Grace looked at him steadily, without speaking.

"Go to bed, Hewie," she said at last, gently. "You know I would n't sleep a wink. Remember you have to go to work to-morrow."

"I'm going to stay up," he repeated stubbornly, and sat down with his book again.

The rain was still streaming against the north windows when a little later he looked at his watch. Hewitt expected to find the hour was nine, or, at the latest, ten. The hands pointed to two-thirty. He had been asleep! The house was still. There was not a sound. He yawned and tiptoed to his father's door. The nurse was at the table.

"He's sleeping soundly; his fever is down," she smiled to him. "He's all right," she added.

Hewitt was awakened by the sun shining through his white blinds the next morning. He jumped to his feet, to find his alarm-clock pointing to eight fifteen. There was not a sound in the house. He raised his blinds and looked upon a bright green world, wet and glistening. It was a glorious, almost cold day, one

such as comes at long intervals in August in Indiana. A fat robin on the grass was splitting his throat with his shrill call, and a woodpecker on the tin eaves was announcing to the world that he was alive and well, and working hard.

Hewitt went downstairs in his bathrobe for a cold tub. He felt dull and lazy, despite the clear air and a night's rest. He found Grace asleep on the yellow plush-couch in the dining-room. A quilt, with yellow tulips distributed regularly over its stitched white surface, was thrown over her. Her mouth was slightly open, giving a comical effect to her chubby face. He went upstairs without his plunge, afraid to turn on the water in the bathroom for fear of waking his father and the nurse. The latter, he was sure, was asleep in the room that had been his grandfather's.

On the seventh of September, the date when Hewitt was to have left for Chicago, his father was sitting up for the first time. He was cleanly shaven, and there were tremendous hollows in his cheeks. His hands, long and bony, lay inert on the covers at the end of wrists incredibly thin.

"Of course I can't come," Hewitt wrote to Paul, as though the fact were accepted with no regrets. "I will stay here until the winter term. Father's pretty sick still, though he is sitting up. The nurse says he won't be able to walk for a month, and then he'll have to learn all over again, like a child. I think he did n't care much whether he pulled through or not. He has been rather knocked out by this farm business. I

don't believe he has ever been satisfied since he sold out and moved to town. That idea of his, that it would be fine to be retired, with no pressing work to do, seemed all wrong after he had tried it for a year, and I think he's been getting more and more run down physically for ages.

"Sometimes, Paul, I feel guilty about not carrying out his plans and going to Purdue, but I could n't. I would have hated it. What do you think? Do you think that I did right to stick to my own plans? Sometimes I feel responsible for all this typhoid business. It makes me sick. But a man's work makes a lot of difference to him. I had to choose my own kind, and it was not farming."

Hewitt mailed this letter on the day he had planned, months before, to start for the university. He had already talked matters over with Mr. Smith, and had been assured that the book-store would go into bankruptcy without him.

"I hope you don't go at Christmas time, either," the proprietor told him with a laugh. Afterward he came up to Hewitt and slapped him on the back with robust friendliness. "Too bad, Son; college will keep, though."

Blake, too, came into the store one morning and grasped Hewitt's hand.

"Awfully sorry you can't go away to school this fall, Stevenson," he said, and smiled his sympathy. The act had touched Hewitt. Blake Smith was true blue, like his father.

Charles Stevenson said not a word to his son about college. He seemed to assume that Hewitt was to remain in Alston indefinitely. Hewitt wondered whether he did this without considering his disappointment, or whether he had forgotten. But college was never mentioned between them.

After he had mailed his letter to Paul, Hewitt went into the store and started his day's work with an attempt at cheeriness. He was n't going to be a cad about a disappointment. His mind kept turning to Mary Young. Would she remember that he had intended to leave Alston on that day? He wondered if she knew how ill his father had been. The item had been in the local paper. But she had never mentioned it to him. If she knew, she had forgotten, no doubt.

He could not keep from thinking about Chicago, however. Letsky and Bowman and the rest of the radicals would be coming into the book-store for the first session of the season. Mr. Woody — Hewitt could see him leaning on a pile of books, his white head thrown back, an amused glitter in the dark eyes behind his gold-rimmed spectacles — would be arguing with the alert, long-haired, violent Letsky.

Hewitt was more than usually courteous to customers. He sought extra work, determined to fight down the lump that kept pressing into his dry throat.

It was a dull day, rainy and gloomy, with a promise of fall.

At five o'clock Hewitt lost the determined grip on

himself he had inaugurated in the morning and called up Mary Young. He had not talked to her for any length of time since the beginning of his father's illness nearly a month before.

She was surprised.

"Hewitt? You deserter! I've hardly caught a glimpse of you for months!"

"You didn't want anything but a glimpse, did you?" he queried.

"You're being naughty. Of course I want to see you."

"To-night?" he asked, afraid that it couldn't be true.

"Oh!" she said, and paused. "I'm going to a dance at the Alston Club. Would you like to come down for an hour before I go?"

Hewitt grasped at the straw.

When he went he had a sense of excitement that he should have at last broken through his determination not to demand bread of her. There was the chance that she would behave toward him as she had done the day of his grandfather's funeral, that she would kiss his wounds and make him serene again.

The rain had stopped, leaving the air damp and full of autumn chill. Hewitt had put on a new, light top-coat over his blue summer suit. He had done so with a thrill of satisfaction. His bank account had not grown swollen during the summer months. His wardrobe was in striking contrast to that of the fall before, when he had come down on the Pullman from

Chicago to Alston. He felt equal to being unaffected by the scorn Letsky would heap upon him in January, that is, if he ever reached Chicago. To-night, as he made his way through the chill air toward the Trimble house, he felt doubtful about ever reaching Chicago. It seemed far away, a city of the bright dreams of youth that never come true.

He wondered why it had been his father who must have typhoid and require his son's presence at home, instead of Blake Smith's, for instance. Blake's road seemed a very smooth and easy one to Hewitt.

He was thinking, too, as he walked through the damp streets, that the tall woman in control over the horn of plenty did n't exist for everybody. Sometimes she went into hiding or died, or somehow she inexplicably disappeared with her fruits. He was inclined, in fact, to be doubtful of whether she had ever appeared and offered him the opportunity of buying. Some people were pursued by an inexorable fate which snatched the good out of their lives. He, of all the young men of his acquaintance in Alston, was the only one who had seen a grandfather die and a father lie near to death with typhoid,—all in one summer, and that the one before his intended entrance into a university three years later than the average boy graduated from high school. He who needed most to hurry was the one whom fate retarded now.

Hewitt grew bitter. He was n't getting a square deal; and he knew that the only reason he had n't been a little bitter about it before was because he had had

a sneaking hope that something — he had n't known what he expected — would happen to make his plans come out right.

Mary was radiant in a low-cut gown of dark blue crêpe over some shining white stuff that bared her neck and arms. There was something white and fluffy in her hair, arising from a blue band, which seemed to make her eyes deeper and darker. She made Hewitt sit down while she told him about the dances and parties that had kept her occupied for a month. Her tone was apologetic, as though it were she, rather than he, who had broken the cord of their seeing each other often. Even as he recognized the paradox of the situation, Hewitt was wondering if she were not right about it — that he had kept away because she had not sent the signal for him to come. He suddenly became scornful of his supposed strength.

Dr. Jimmy Trimble was sitting under a reading-lamp in the library at the back of the hall, so that at first Hewitt thought Mary was keeping to these trifles of talk because of his presence. But at eight the doctor went upstairs, where his wife could be heard moving through the hall, and Hewitt and Mary were left alone in the living-room.

The trend of her talk did not change. She was gay and charming. Hewitt sat watching her with his gray eyes, which had taken on a look of childish sadness. His mouth was set in a faint smile. His dark hair lay smooth, boyishly smooth and so close cut above his ears and neck that it seemed shaven. His fingers

were interlaced between his knees as he leaned forward to watch Mary.

He could have cried out with joy at her eager beauty. She was like a child, he thought, reaching out for the happiness she had once said she so wanted. Was she getting it? No, she would never be satisfied, because she wanted too much. She desired excitement, joy, and never that contentment in which lay, so thought Hewitt, real happiness. Would she never be done with flitting in search of what could only be found within herself?

These thoughts were flowing through a hinterland of Hewitt's brain, while his disappointment over his spoiled university course became increasingly unimportant before the disappointment in his altered relations with Mary Young. She did not even remember that he had been planning to go to Chicago. She did not mention it. She had forgotten it.

During the month or more since she had last talked with him at any length, he had not existed for her. Hewitt had a sudden queer feeling that when she completely forgot him, as she was sure to do if he left Alston, he would cease to exist altogether. There would be no Hewitt Stevenson. So sharp was his emotion when he was near Mary!

Hewitt was relieved, because he longed to be alone with this new sorrow, when a swish of water in the street and then a cessation of the sound told them that a motor was stopping outside. He glanced out of the window and recognized the visitor.

"I must go now," he said, rising and reaching for his coat and hat.

"It's Tom Brandon. You shall ride down-town with us. It's wet to-night."

Hewitt tried to say that he wanted to walk, but Mary's insistence and Brandon's arrival at the door made refusal awkward; so he got into the car with them, and talked commonplaces while they glided toward Meridian Street.

"Drop me at the store," he suggested. Mrs. Chancellor had agreed to lock up for him, but he wanted to be sure that things were properly looked after for the night.

"Good-night," Mary's voice echoed in his ear as he unlocked the door of the darkened store and walked, by the light from the windows, toward the rear. There he switched on a desk-lamp and sat down in Mr. Smith's swivel-chair. He pulled a copy of Browning out of his overcoat pocket and laid it down. He had lent it to Mary in the early summer, and she had returned it to him to-night.

As he picked it up again and ran through the pages without reading them, Hewitt found some scraps of paper, torn scraps, but written upon in writing he knew to be his, between the pages. He placed the fragments in order against a page. This was a note he had written Mary in July, when he had first begun to grow discontented with her. He had spent, he remembered, a day and a night in composing it. He had written and destroyed and written again, determined

to make it beautiful. He had sent it by messenger, with roses.

And here was the note, carelessly torn and thrust into a convenient book. Hewitt felt sure Mary had never read the poems he had marked for her in the table of contents. The book had merely been near her. He read the note slowly. It ran thus:

Dearest:

I, a moth, lately come out from the dullness of brown cocoon, have seen the light of your candle. I flutter about, blindly striving to warm myself at the flame of your strong sweetness. My wings are singed and torn. They were never very beautiful wings, and now they are uglier than before.

But you, so full of the joy of existence, will look upon them with gentle compassion, will you not, remembering that they were burned at your candle?

I love you!

HEWITT.

The inside of his cheek burned where he had drawn the flesh between his teeth. He bit into it again and again as he sat looking at the words on that torn paper. Well, Mary had torn the paper. The words had meant nothing to her, no more than a passing feeling that here was another boy breaking out into pretty speeches.

He lighted the scraps, one by one, over matches, and allowed the charred pieces to drop through his fingers into the basket.

It was after eleven when Hewitt looked at the court-house clock on his way out. A man must stand on

his own two feet, he was thinking, but he felt as if he had suddenly come upon himself in front of a huge stone wall, thick and impregnable, beating his head against its hardness, while a voice, compassionately and adorably sweet, sang a song from the other side to make him forget his hurt. There was a gate farther down the wall where men came and went, men who, had this gate been closed, would have wandered on to some spot where other songs were being sung. But Hewitt did not know there was a gate.

Hewitt had thrown a book into the muddy gutter when he first emerged from the store, but after he had looked at the clock in the court-house tower until the large hand moved, he went out and picked it up. His face wore a smile that grew broader as he wiped off the mud with his handkerchief. He put the damp volume of Browning into his pocket and started for home.

A few weeks later Hewitt heard from Mr. Smith that Mary Young was going to Chicago, and that later she would go back to California for the winter. But before she left Alston she telephoned Hewitt one afternoon and asked him to come down after he had closed the store that evening. She wanted to say good-bye to him, she said.

Despite his studied indifference, Hewitt could not help being freshly angered when he saw that Katherine Miller and her younger sister were there. They left, however, before he did, and he had a few minutes alone with Mary.

"You're going to be a good boy, and grow famous for Mary's sake, are n't you?" she asked Hewitt, pulling her chair in front of him and taking his hands in hers.

He did not answer.

"You're not going to forget me again, are you?" she asked, weaving her smooth fingers in and out through his.

"How could I?" Hewitt said, in a tone that became a half-cry, despite his determination not to show her that he cared greatly.

"You must n't ever forget me," Mary went on, almost solemnly. "And when you have become a great person whom Alston bows down to, I shall come back and marry you." She smiled at him to show that she was jesting with him.

He left soon after this, shaking her hand in saying good-bye. He knew he could have kissed her if he had chosen to do it, but he determinedly regained his indifference.

"You *are* going to forget me," Mary said half-sadly, as Hewitt opened the door. "I can feel that you are."

He smiled, and tried to make his expression enigmatical, but he was sure that she understood.

CHAPTER XX

EVERY age has its compensations. Maturity is debtor for an implacability which magnifies atoms and ignores the great emotions. Youth has its fine resiliency.

Hewitt Stevenson did not mope long because Mary Young had considered him an episode to be lightly passed over. He knew very well that the slight feeling, affected or real, she had shown in parting from him was only a tiny part of the emotion aroused by her leave-taking of an entire community. She loved Alston, she had always said, and she was not one to leave it without making sure to the limit of her powers that everyone for whom she had ever felt any affection loved her to the end. This surety that Hewitt would not forget her was only another blossom in an already large bouquet she wanted to wear in departing from Indiana. Yet that, Hewitt realized, was not a perfect explanation of Mary. In her way, she was fond of him, too, just as she was of Katherine Miller and Ernestine and the rest of her cortège. She was a very wonderful Mary Young, but a very complex one.

Instead, indeed, of continuing to mope about Mary, Hewitt's feeling on the morning after she left for Chicago was one of profound relief. It was as

though, in his love, he had been climbing a steep mountain, rocky and dangerous with crevasses, and had at last reached the top, where a broad valley, restful and fair, lay stretched out before him, a valley heretofore concealed by the mountain, but the more welcome because of relief from the effort expended in the climb. Hewitt sat down on the mountain top. "Now I can rest," he said to himself, referring to his mental state.

He worked with exhilaration during the first day, certain that Mary Young would not be seen or heard, to send his pulse booming and his heart pounding. He felt safe, as though he could never again be moved, protected by a thick skin of content.

"Now that we have proved to Alston that it can take an interest in serious literature of the better type, let's start in on magazine taste," he said to Mr. Smith, planting himself with his feet apart in front of that gentleman as he sat scanning the morning paper.

"H'm," Mr. Smith snorted. "What next?"

"I haven't decided definitely, but that's right about magazines," averred Hewitt, with a grin. "Want to bet?"

"On what?"

"That I can decrease sales on the cheap, trashy ones, and run up sales on the good ones."

"H'm," snorted Mr. Smith again.

"Let me have a window and a table up in front."

"Help yourself, Son. The store is yours." He stood up and Hewitt made a deep bow. "I step back. Age gives way."

"Oh, don't put it that way," Hewitt demurred.

"All right; but go ahead."

The rest of the week found Hewitt spending much of his time over a case in the back of the store, where he was busy with a ruler, a bottle of India ink, drawing pens, and some fine brushes.

Mr. Smith stopped one morning, on entering the store, to examine one of the windows. It was empty, except for a rustic green bench against a background of plain green wall. On the bench was thrown a copy of one of the better thirty-five-cent magazines, gay in its October cover. In another corner of the window stood a placard boldly asking the passerby, "Who killed Kenyon Stringer?"

Mr. Smith frowned and performed his old trick of dropping his glasses over in the front of his none-too-clean "vest." But his surprise was not complete until he had read a second placard placed in the glass of the door. It ran as follows:

No one knows who killed Stringer — yet, because that is not a real copy of *Blank's Magazine* in the window. It is only an advance dummy.

But *Blank's* is out to-morrow!

Get your copy, and find out the solution to the most interesting mystery in fall fiction.

"H'm," Mr. Smith commented, glaring at Hewitt as he went back to his desk. He found the latter tapping away at the typewriter about some orders.

The next morning the window had been changed.

The corner of a library was suggested by a sectional bookcase, a table with a reading-light, and a chair. On the table was laid the same magazine. A placard in the corner announced:

Kenyon Stringer was not a member of the famous stage triangle.

He was an irreproachable husband and father, but he was murdered.

Why?

The person who is going to sit down in this room presently will find out.

On the street door appeared a second placard:

Blank's is out!

Get *Yours* To-day.

We have just 100 copies in stock.

At half-hour intervals during the afternoon, a young man, hired for the purpose, appeared in the window, sat down in the chair, switched on the light, and occupied himself for some minutes with *Blank's Magazine*. Then, when a crowd had gathered, he went close to the glass and opened the magazine at the beginning of the Kenyon Stringer murder-story, where a full-page illustration greeted the eyes of the onlookers. He proceeded to turn the pages of the magazine, allowing his audience a glimpse of the attractive, soft-toned illustrations.

Abe Kahn called Mr. Smith to the telephone about four o'clock.

"Say, Smith, I'm going to have you arrested for enticing the crowd away from my side of the street. What under the sun is happening over there?"

"My assistant-manager is advertising *Blank's Magazine*. Come on over and buy a copy."

"The devil!" said Mr. Kahn, and hung up.

At the end of the day Hewitt approached Mr. Smith. His face wore a sly smile.

"Well?" queried his superior.

"I sold twenty-seven copies of *Blank's* to-day. That's twenty-six more than have ever been sold in this store before. What do you think of my advertising?"

"I don't like it. It's not dignified business."

"Want me to stop?"

"No. How much did you pay that boy to sit in the window?"

"A dollar for the afternoon."

"Making money on that magazine?"

"No, not yet. But we will to-morrow, and next month, too."

Charles Stevenson improved slowly. He sat up at intervals for a few weeks, and then had a relapse. The nurse was recalled for a week, but again he grew better. There were moments when his son was sorry that he had stayed home, instead of going to Chicago. He seemed to mean nothing to his father. The latter spoke to him when he came into the room at noon and again at night, but he seemed uninterested in the other's presence. Grace was absorbed in her father.

She remained in his room most of the time. In fact, she seemed never to enter the front part of the house, except to sweep and dust.

"I suppose father likes to know I am here," Hewitt wrote to Paul, "on Grace's account. He is still weak, and he sits up only a part of the time. Grace looks pretty thin, but she can't be induced to leave father, even for an hour. You know how she is when she decides on a course of action. She and father and grandfather are all much alike in that respect. I wonder if you and I are? Anyway, I don't see it."

Early in October a woman, who was very pretty and smart, came into the store one afternoon and subscribed for some magazines. Hewitt had never seen her before, but he noted Mrs. Patton waiting in her car outside.

"Mrs. Jean Conners," she told Hewitt, when he asked her for her name. She had a frank, friendly smile.

He remembered that Mary Young had spoken of the Conners, and that Margaret Hawtrey, on the night of the "open house," had spoken of Susannah Conners as not going back to Smith College. So this pleasant woman in black was Mrs. Conners, Mary Young's friend, the mother of Susannah. He watched her as she went out of the door, stepping gracefully and firmly. Hewitt was reminded of the nurse who had cared for his father, although the two were very different types, Mrs. Conners being dark, with brown eyes that looked kind. The nurse had

been light, and was rather cold, except when she smiled. But there was the same quiet surety of step and intensity of kindness in both of them.

Later Mrs. Conners came in when Mr. Smith was standing by the stationery case.

"Mr. Smith!" she exclaimed with enthusiasm.

"Jean Conners!" he ejaculated explosively. "When did you come back to town? How's li'l old New York, and how's Susie?"

"To begin with the last, don't call her Susie. It bores her dreadfully. You see, with a year at college and a summer in New York and at the seashore, she has grown up, and I have to use her full name. I've been in Alston several days, and I'm surprised that my arrival was n't important enough for you to know about it." She stopped, and smiled. "I'm immensely glad to be back," she added softly. "New York is lovely — sometimes, but one longs for Alston and the old friends. In no place in the world are people so nice as in Alston. Don't you believe it?"

"I know it. I moved to Seattle once."

They laughed together. All Alston remembered the time when Mr. Smith had packed his household goods and gods and set out for the West with his wife and children. In six months he was back in Alston, ashamed to mention the glorious West.

"I could n't stand it. It was n't home," he confessed to Mrs. Conners now, though in the past he had never referred to his exit and reentrance. "Where's Susannah?"

"In Indianapolis. She's coming up to-day. She's been staying with Martha Trimble's sister for a few days. You'll love her. She's so grown up."

Hewitt passed them, to close the door which had been left open.

"Come here, Hewitt," Mr. Smith called to him. "Mrs. Conners has come back to Alston, and I want you to know her. This is Hewitt Stevenson, once of Chicago, but now my right-hand man—until Christmas."

Mrs. Conners held out her hand to Hewitt.

"You're Mary Young's Hewitt Stevenson, aren't you?" she said, with her kind smile. "I want you to come to the little dinner-party I am having for my daughter, Susannah, to-morrow night. You see, we have been away for more than a year, and we must hurry to catch up with our acquaintances. Mary wrote me about you. She said Susannah would like you. Will you come?"

"I shall be glad to come," said Hewitt, the hand she still held beginning to tremble. Was he again to be tortured by caste three functions?

"At six thirty, then," she said, releasing his hand with a gentle pressure.

"Where are you staying?" Mr. Smith asked, while Hewitt leaned unsteadily against the glass case and tried to be natural.

"We've taken Kathleen Harrow's house on Eighth Street. It's furnished, you know. We shall stay here this winter. Susannah was n't well. I refused

to let her go back to Smith. She shall enjoy Alston, and perhaps will return to school next year."

"At six thirty," she mentioned again to Hewitt, as she turned to leave.

Mrs. Jean Conners, so Hewitt had learned from bits of gossip picked up here and there during the year he had spent in Alston, was a person who combined all the ideal womanly qualities into a bundle, without arousing any envy or jealousy in the hearts of other women. She was a combination of Jane Addams, Queen Louise, Florence Nightingale, and the ideal mother. At least, all loyal Alstonians said so. She practised the seven deadly virtues because she liked to practise them, and other women, upon seeing how splendid she appeared in any rôle, were filled with a like desire to be virtuous. All in all, she was a great adjunct to Alston, because the town grew better when she entered it. She gave generously to the deserving poor, and Alston was not so large but that this class was known. She belonged to all the organizations for the betterment of the city, and she was always willing to give a helping hand, though she had not Mrs. George Patton's managing talent. In fact, she did n't manage anything, but she was always ready with money and spirit — which is often a more popular method than Mrs. Patton's. Jim Conners had made his money in gas, and then had died, leaving his wife and Susannah to spend it. Everybody liked them. Susannah was considered to be one of the

two most attractive products of Alston. The other was the Preston Ignition and Starting System.

But Mrs. Conners, in pursuing the virtues, did not sacrifice her social position. It was, perhaps, too firm to be sacrificed. Even if she had chosen to scorn dancing and bridge-playing according to the ruling of her Methodist Church, she would have remained secure as a woman everybody invited to dances and to bridge parties. People naturally liked her.

Mary Young had been devoted to her. This in itself was a tribute to her positivity of character and accomplishment, the fruit of the latter being, of course, Susannah. Mary Young was never devoted to any one who did not excel. She was the barometer of an Alstonian's merit, not because she was, as Hewitt had once accused her of being, a parasite on the best of caste three, but because she admired, and so gave devotion only to those who stood out as being superior to the mass, even of her own group.

Young Alston was excited over Susannah's return to its bosom. Ernestine Smith ran into the store late in the afternoon to tell her father that Susannah was coming at seven. Could n't they take Susannah and her mother to the Grand Hotel for dinner? Mr. Smith demurred.

"Let's not go so fast," he said. "Why not wait until the Conners are settled and ready for entertainment?"

Ernestine pouted.

"Dad!"

"All right. Go ahead. I s'pose I can eat something at home at six. I can't wait until seven-thirty or so for my dinner."

"But you 'll come?"

"Want me? Why not just the young people?"

"We want all ages."

That settled it, since Ernestine wanted the whole family.

Hewitt was standing at the door of the store that evening, when the Smith car drew up and ejected Mr. Smith.

"Forgot something," he explained, as he hurried, in his peculiar way, back to his desk.

Hewitt moved away from the door, but not before he had seen Ernestine, at the wheel, in earnest but merry conversation with a girl whom Hewitt took to be Susannah Conners. He could only make out that she must be very pretty, under a hat which curved down, concealing most of her features. One jumped at the conclusion that Susannah was pretty. She was taller than Ernestine, he judged, and not exactly plump, but rounded.

Three of Joe Bales' friends — Hewitt never distinguished among the young men of Alston — hurried up to the car and made a great to-do of shaking hands and being tickled to death over Susannah's return. They also included Mrs. Conners in their demonstration.

The next day Hewitt began to be uncomfortable, as

a prelude to the Conners' dinner-party, early in the morning. He had laid out his best suit, preparatory to sending it to the cleaner's for pressing, but upon gazing at it as it hung on the railing of the stairway, he was seized with qualms concerning the appropriateness of wearing a street suit to a dinner-party. He drew his upper lip down under his lower one and studied deeply. Joe Bales went to dinner-parties, but Hewitt had never seen him in the act of going. He might wear overalls, for all Hewitt knew, or, worse still, full dress. Hewitt ended by sending the suit. It required pressing, whether he wore it or not. He also sent his light top-coat with the smart belt. He liked that coat, and the cool evenings required one.

During the morning Hewitt was several times the victim of an impulse to ask Mr. Smith what kind of clothing a young man should wear to a caste three dinner-party in Alston. He thought of opening speeches, casual references to clothing in general, supplemented by a remark on the common sense people in Alston showed in refusing to be shackled by full dress. He had worn a street-suit to the Hawtreys' "open house," but that had been an informal dance. The Conners had been living for a year in New York. What would they expect of him?

Hewitt ended by rejecting Mr. Smith as an advisor concerning appropriate clothing. Mr. Smith would see through his ruse, because he had heard Mrs. Conners invite Hewitt to the party.

He thought once of telephoning Joe Bales at Pres-

ton's to ask him about the matter, but that, too, was rejected, because one hates above all things to be made the laughing stock of one's contemporaries. Mr. Smith would have been preferable to Joe.

At noon Hewitt had not come to the decision as to whether to ask, or to remain silent and chance the suit he had already sent to the cleaner's. The time to act had come. If he had to buy a dress-suit, he must buy it that afternoon. The bother of not being able to have it tailored did not disturb him, because he had always been satisfied with "Smart Set" clothes. They suited him. He rather disliked spending forty or fifty dollars on a suit he probably would never need again, but going to the Conners' dinner-party in the wrong kind of clothing, and thus having his discomfort augmented by the knowledge that he was inappropriately clothed, was not to be thought of — not if a dress-suit cost a hundred dollars!

Hewitt walked back and forth the length of the store several times after he returned from his dinner. Mrs. Chancellor asked him if he was feeling well, and he forced a smile of reassurance.

At length he put on his cap and walked across the street to Kahn's Men's Furnishing Store.

Hewitt saw Mr. Kahn in the rear of the store, his elbow on a high pile of folded coats, his face contorted into a frown. He was talking to a clerk.

Hewitt told the man who approached him that he wanted to see Mr. Kahn, and when the latter moved away, he went to the owner.

Hewitt, too, leaned an elbow on a pile of coats. He had prepared an opening speech, but his mind became a blank. After a moment of awkward silence, he spoke.

"Mr. Kahn, I want a word of advice. What kind of clothes do men in Alston wear to a — rather,— a dinner-party,— the Conners', for instance?"

Mr. Kahn's mobile mouth made queer shapes, but he did not smile.

"Not full dress, or even a Tuxedo, if that's what's worrying you, Stevenson. Regular business clothes. That suit I sold you in the spring is all right. Or we have some new fall goods that will make you look like a million dollars. Come on over here. I want to show you a mottled gray cloth that will take your eye in a minute."

"Yes," Hewitt hesitated, "but you could n't get it done so that I could wear it to-night, could you?"

"I'll fix things for you. Come over here."

Of course Hewitt bought a new suit of thick, gray cloth, with bright threads running through it. He had to be quick to hide a smile, when he looked at himself in the tall mirror Mr. Kahn led him to.

"I told you you'd look like a million," Mr. Kahn told him. "You can have it at five-thirty. And the price is only thirty-five dollars."

Thereafter the day was more pleasant, although a new griffin erected its head toward five o'clock and Hewitt hunted patiently, but without result, through books on miscellaneous subjects on a back shelf, in

search of a volume on etiquette. He went over to the library finally, and there found three such books in the open stacks. They dealt largely with formal receptions and etiquette in Washington and he came across only one line that threw the least light on the correct course of action at a small dinner-party in Alston, Indiana. "Use the table silver from the outside in," said this third book. Hewitt had already known this from going to hotels with Paul, but he was glad to have it reaffirmed. He wondered whether a gentleman pushed in the chair for the lady he took in to dinner. He wondered about wine. They certainly would not serve wine, however, at a dinner-party given in honor of a young girl. Besides, Grace had said that the Conners were Methodists. So there was no use deciding whether you cared for wine or not, or any other little points like that.

By six-fifteen, when he stood arrayed in his new suit and a quiet tie which Abe Kahn had helped him select, with a clean handkerchief in his hand and a silk one to match his tie in his upper coat-pocket, the weight of helplessness before a dinner-party with caste three was bearing down on Hewitt terribly. He applied a little talcum powder to his nose, and then wiped it off carefully with his handkerchief. He did n't want the powder to show. He gave an extra polish to his already immaculate brown shoes, and tried to get a complete picture of his feet and legs by standing on the bed and looking into the small oval of his bureau mirror. He readjusted the cuff of his trousers as

he got down. He pulled his coat forward on his shoulders by lifting them slightly. He tied his scarf again and pulled down his vest. It was a little snug, he decided. He would have it refitted to-morrow.

"Hewitt!" came Grace's voice from below. "Do you know it's twenty minutes after six? You'd better hurry!"

He felt irritated by this reminder of the time, and he pulled out his watch to see if five minutes could have elapsed since his last examination of the gold watch Paul had sent him the Christmas before. He found that Grace was right, but this did not eliminate his irritation. His cheeks were mottled with red in a queer way they had when he became excited. They were not red where cheeks should be red, but in spots, especially near his jaws. He examined them with his hand-mirror and applied talcum, but immediately he rubbed it off again.

"Hewie!" called Grace from below. "If you don't hurry, you'll be late at the Conners' and will feel foolish."

Grace took especial interest in the Conners on account of the similarity of their religious faith to her own. She was proud that Hewitt was going to their house to dinner, although she did not let him see her pride.

Hewitt gave a last brush to his smooth hair and seized his top-coat and gray hat. The hat looked rather battered, but a new suit and hat on the same night would have been too conspicuous. Besides, he

wanted a derby for winter, though he hesitated about appearing in one for the first time. A derby was unusually noticeable when new. It was so stiff and unwieldy.

He said good-bye to Grace and his father, who was sitting up in a chair for the first time, and started off at a brisk pace. He changed to a slower walk before he passed the post-office. He was n't going to make himself breathless and hot when he arrived — rather late, he feared — at the Eighth Street residence.

Hewitt need not have feared. The guests had not all arrived when he was ushered into the hall of the dignified old Harrow house which the Conners had taken for the winter. Their own house had been sold to the Y. M. C. A. committee for an association home.

The maid took his hat and coat, and Mrs. Conners came through the heavy velvet curtains and took his hand. There had always been something dramatic to Hewitt about a woman's appearing in an opening of heavy curtains. It now struck him that Mrs. Conners was, in her way, as beautiful as Mrs. Stewart or Mary Young. And then he was freshly struck by the thought that he seemed very susceptible to woman's beauty in Alston, whereas in Chicago he had never noticed women. Oh, yes; he remembered that he had thought Paul's wife was pretty.

The Harrow house was furnished with the massive carved furniture in vogue thirty or forty years before. There were stiff portraits in oil on the walls, evidently

the Harrow family of Civil War times, and from the high ceilings hung elaborate chandeliers, with clinking stalactite crystals hanging in clusters from their white arms.

Susannah Conners was standing near the middle of the room. She was dressed in silver and white, with glistening little silver slippers. A silver band was around her head. Her hair was bright, darker than golden, but still bright, especially at her temples where it curled into small rings that she evidently had tried to brush back. It was laid in two wide braids around her head above the silver band. Her flesh looked warm and pink, especially rosy under the dark blue eyes in which a faint suggestion of a smile played as she was introduced to Hewitt.

Susannah led him into a back parlor as large and high as the first. Instead of containing oil portraits, it was decorated with oil landscapes of a hideous hard impossibility. In one picture a river was set in mother-of-pearl between banks of harsh green upon which mother-of-pearl daisies blossomed in heavenly profusion. That mother-of-pearl stream almost made Hewitt laugh, despite his trembling diffidence before Bob Hawtrey, Martin Booth, son of the town's leading attorney and former Congressman, Anne Miller and Margaret Hawtrey, who had not gone away to school, after all. But he immediately forgot his inclination to smile, being faced with the necessity of seating himself easily and naturally in an enormous chair which swallowed him with unexpected suddenness and left him

buried in a sea of leather. He was startled, and felt the mottled red crimsoning his cheeks.

Bob Hawtrey was telling about a fishing excursion he had made on the lakes in the northern part of Michigan. Martin Booth was listening, but Margaret Hawtrey was humming an air and moving her foot rhythmically, as if uninterested, and Anne Miller was running her fingers through her fluffy hair before a glassed oil-landscape which served her as a mirror.

Mrs. Conners interrupted the fish story by following Hewitt and Susannah into the room and thrusting Bob's head backward by the chin, while she looked into his surprised face.

"I don't believe a word of it, you imaginative boy!" she said with a laugh. "Neither does Martin, even though he behaves as though he did, nor Margaret — she's your sister — nor Anne, who's very busy making herself pretty, nor Susannah, who's very discerning, though my daughter, nor Hewitt Stevenson. Now have you the courage to go on?"

She released his chin, and he stood up quickly and placed his hands on her shoulders, shaking her with vigor.

"Just because you've been in New York —" he began, and then releasing her, turned to Susannah. "Susie —"

Susannah put up an accusing finger at him.

"Robbie!"

"I forgot. Susannah, did you meet Casper Howard in Northampton?"

She shook her head.

"He's a corking tennis-player. He played in the state tournament last year, and was runner-up. He goes around the country, winning state championships. That's a rotten system, is n't it," he addressed the group as a whole, "permitting an out-of-state man to compete for the state prize?"

"I wonder why they manage it that way?" Hewitt mused aloud. He was shocked at the strangeness of his own voice. It sounded hollow, as though it were issuing from a well of great depth.

Bob Hawtrey shrugged in answer, and Mrs. Connors went toward the hall to bring in Helen Baxter and Joe Bales.

The talk in the back parlor, as soon as they were seated, broke up into group discussions, and Hewitt found himself with Margaret Hawtrey — with whom he felt more at ease than with any one except Joe — and Martin Booth and Anne Miller. He resisted his impulse to settle back in his leather grave and make himself as inconspicuous as possible. He had n't been invited to a dinner-party to be comfortable, but to help other people enjoy themselves, even if *he* could n't. So Hewitt sat up and leaned his hands forward across his knees. His coat disturbed him. It seemed to slip back, exposing too much collar in the back. He took to lifting his shoulder at intervals in order to make it set properly. This movement gave him something to do, too, and kept him from feeling extremely awkward. Margaret Hawtrey was being nice to him, he appre-

ciated when she mentioned having read a novel by a Chicago woman. She had liked it. She wondered if any one else there had read it.

No one had, but Hewitt had read a previous one by the same author and praised it, not because he felt that it deserved praise, but because he wanted to repay Margaret. This was not the demand of hostess upon guest, and he appreciated her effort and wished to show her that he did.

Martin Booth liked O. Henry, he said. He had bought a set for himself, and often, when he went home at night, he sat up in bed and read a few stories before he went to sleep. O. Henry was a prince, according to Martin. He said things in a way a fellow could laugh at and still be touched about. That story, now, about the young husband with the watch and the girl with beautiful thick hair. The man sold his watch and bought fancy combs for the girl, and she sold her hair and bought him a watch-chain for Christmas. That somehow got a fellow. It was a good story.

Anne Miller hated books. Katherine liked to read, but *she* loathed them. The last was said with emphasis. If she ever got out of high school, and they did n't make her go to college (she 'd never go of her own free will) she would never open another book. She preferred to dance and motor — anything, except to read!

Margaret was kindly superior to this attitude. One was n't educated unless one read books. She was reading "Vanity Fair" now.

"Don't you adore it?" she asked Hewitt, with enthusiasm. "I adore *Becky Sharp* and *Amelia*."

The other group was having a more interesting time, if noise was any test. Joe Bales was trying to climb up Bob Hawtrey by means of hands and feet, and Bob was offering him no assistance. Their fun was interrupted by Homer Gray's appearance.

"Go to it, lads!" he said. "Mrs. Conners says to enjoy yourselves. Susannah is back, so we should worry about destruction of furniture." Bob had backed against and upset a small revolving bookcase. Joe hastened to rescue it, with no blush of shame.

"Ought n't to keep your bookcases out so far," he blustered to Susannah. "Ought to put 'em against the wall, where bookcases belong. Just because they put 'em in the middle of the room in New York —"

He was stopped by Susannah's hand over his mouth.

"I won't let you make fun of us!" she said.

"Dinner," announced the same maid who had opened the door.

There was no particular order about their going out to dinner, Hewitt found, and he and Margaret Hawtrey were the last to find their places, indicated by hand-colored cards. Hewitt's chair was between Susannah's and Margaret's. He felt relieved and glad. He was sure that he could n't stand Anne Miller or Helen Baxter during an entire dinner. He knew that he took strong prejudices against people, as Mary Young had told him, and he had already taken one against Anne Miller on the night of Margaret's dance.

Helen Baxter was not so bad, but she was not particularly attractive to him.

Joe Bales was attending to Helen's chair, and Hewitt did likewise for Susannah. In doing this, he again noticed the rosy firmness of her skin and the bright streaks in her hair at the temples.

She was like a water-lily, Hewitt decided, suddenly pleased with this figure of speech. She was waxily firm and strong, and rounded delicately. She was slightly taller, when she stood, than any of the other girls present, but in sitting her shoulders drooped slightly forward in a way that made her look younger than when she was erect. She must be nineteen, he thought, but she looked that indeterminate age which makes it impossible to judge accurately the age of one of her type from sixteen to twenty-three or four. There was a smile on her lips continually, but it was hardly more than a negation of seriousness.

Homer Gray was guiding the general conversation from his place beside Mrs. Conners. He seemed to amuse her immensely by his quick bits of satire and his explosive jests at the expense of the more youthful members of the party. Susannah talked little, but she turned to Hewitt several times with a comment meant for him alone. This attention flattered him. She was, he could tell, taking him very seriously, as a brilliant person temporarily sojourning in Alston, as the kind of a boy Mary Young had publicly valued. He was glad now of Mary Young's endorsement. It was she who had made possible this notice of his intellectual superi-

ority. He was sorry for all the times a truant third Hewitt had maligned and insulted her. She was a wonderful Mary, and a real friend. She had spurned him privately, but had lauded him to caste three. And he felt now that he would willingly have endured all the misery — it seemed much less in retrospect than it actually had been — of loving her without hope of an adequate return, if he had then known that it was Mary who was to make it possible for him to sit almost calmly beside Susannah Connors at a dinner-party in her mother's house. It was sweet and entirely characteristic of Mary to write to Mrs. Connors about him. At a distance she had probably been overcome with repentance for having aroused a love which had been stronger than she had counted on. She would never have admitted it in Alston, but she probably knew that she had been responsible for an unhappiness in him which she might have easily avoided from the first. So she had written this letter, mentioning him as a nice newcomer whom Susannah would like. Hewitt correctly analyzed her act in this way.

Colleges, tennis, New York, golf, railroad accommodation between Alston and New York, and plays came up in turn for light discussion.

Hewitt had few opinions on any of these subjects, except about plays, and he used that interest for a wedge to establish his position as a man who counted. He had been necessarily quiet before, breaking into speech only when Susannah's side-remarks made it necessary for him to answer her.

"I went to see Margaret Anglin in 'Green Stockings' during Christmas week with a couple of young Yale professors, men in the history department, you know. Guess whom we saw in a box?" Homer Gray turned to Mrs. Conners, and she raised her eyebrows to indicate her inability to guess correctly. "The Vice-President. He nodded when he saw us. Hoosier spirit, you know." Gray settled back in his chair, his hands in the pockets of his buttoned coat, his chest out. "I've met him, of course, scores of times around the state. Very fine man personally. Our politics don't agree, certainly, but I admire him."

"How was 'Green Stockings'?" Margaret Hawtrey inquired, leaning forward.

"A very clever farce. A woman whose youngest sister is to marry, causing her to wear green stockings, trumps up a love-affair with a man named Smith from India."

"And a real Smith appears and marries her," Hewitt could not resist putting in.

"Did you see it?" Gray asked quickly.

Hewitt smiled.

"No," he replied.

"Ah, a clever guess. The whole thing was well done. I should say that Miss Anglin is one of the most intelligent of our actresses."

The dinner was a simple one, and Hewitt had no trouble with the silver. Susannah and Margaret were both prompt in selecting theirs, but he did not have to watch, once he had run his eye over the row

and placed each piece. He was so relieved that he sighed, and Susannah glanced around curiously at him, her smile deepening without knowing why, except that she felt sympathy for this tall, gray-eyed boy who was quiet, unobtrusive, and intellectual.

"Is she American?" Hewitt put in again, looking intently at Gray. The latter pursed his lips and frowned.

"Isn't she?" he asked almost hostilely, or so Hewitt thought, though he stopped frowning and laughed.

"I was merely asking," Hewitt smiled.

Gray turned to Mrs. Conners.

"Very interesting woman. After the play I was introduced to her. It seems one of my friends had known her in Maine the summer before, and we talked with her for a few minutes afterward."

Joe Bales was getting restless, Hewitt saw, but he himself looked directly at Mrs. Conners and began to speak. At first the words did not come evenly; he even stuttered over several, but he gained confidence as he proceeded. He began with Miss Anglin, and branched out into a talk on American drama.

"In time I suppose we will stop being amused by musical shows, bad music, and nudity, and develop a more distinctly American type of play that will really entertain," he ended, and felt the mottled spots reappearing on his cheeks.

Every one was watching Hewitt. He grew uneasy, and for some reason his fingers touched the glass be-

fore he intended them to. It turned over, and a stream of water flowed across his remaining silver. Hewitt quickly put his napkin over the pool, and the maid took the glass away and quickly brought him another. But for a few minutes he was as miserable as he had been on that night when he attempted to dance. Every one, the minute he had committed the irreparable act, began talking gaily, except Joe Bales, who glowered at him and brought a laugh from the table.

"What did I tell you, Stevenson, before we started? No tricks, now! That water was all right. There was nothing the matter with it!"

Hewitt laughed, too, and decided there was no occasion for great embarrassment. One must carry off accidents like that with a high hand, and nobody seemed to mind. If one seemed to mind, other people became embarrassed, too. So he threw a remark or two at Joe, and was answered in a way that brought another laugh.

There was a long dish of olives and celery on the table which had not been removed after the soup. Joe pulled a piece of celery from it, and offered a bite to Helen Baxter. She contemptuously pushed his hand away.

"Joe, you've started!" she said disapprovingly.

"Here, Hawtrey, have a bite?" Joe called to Bob, leaning across Helen.

Bob took one end of the celery in his mouth, bowing in front of a disgusted Helen to do it. Joe seized the

other end in his teeth, and they pulled like two dogs. Susannah shook with laughter.

"Now I'm sure I'm home," she said.

"I knew Joe would behave like this!" wailed Helen, as though she were responsible.

"Dear, Joe behaved like that before you knew he existed," Mrs. Connors comforted her.

"I'm awful. I'm pure rowdy low-brow," Joe admitted, shaking his head over his deficiencies. "But I'm an angel beside Bob. He knocked the bookcase over."

The formality of the dinner was broken, and the young ones became exuberantly merry. Homer Gray talked to Mrs. Connors, but not before Hewitt had spoken again.

"Say," Martin Booth called, to attract Hewitt's attention, "did you mean a while ago that you don't think the Follies are good entertainment?"

"I did n't have the Follies particularly in mind," Hewitt said. "But they are a combination of vulgarity, nudity, and bad music, are n't they?"

"Well, I had n't ever considered them so. I like them. They're fine! A crowd of us always goes up from here to Indianapolis to see them. What about it, Bob? Do you care for the Follies?"

"Only show I give a rap about. I call them good comedy and catchy music. What's your objection, Stevenson?"

Hewitt shrugged.

"It's hard to explain my objection, if you like them.

Once in a while they get hold of a real comedian, and sometimes they 'make' a song, if you like that kind of song. For my part, I don't care about them."

"But you are amused by the Follies, are n't you, Hewitt?" Homer Gray asked.

"I *have* laughed," Hewitt admitted. "But it was the laugh I sometimes give when a man slips and falls on the ice."

"How's that?"

"Involuntarily, and not because I was sincerely and reasonably amused."

"I wonder if there is such a thing as reasonable amusement," Mrs. Conners suggested.

"Oh, yes," Hewitt answered. "All laughter which is n't caused by a repressed desire coming to the surface is reasonable, an intellectual process."

Joe was getting restless again. He looked steadily at the ceiling and neglected his salad.

"What's up, Joe, literally up?" asked Margaret Hawtrey.

"I'm thinking," said Joe, without changing the direction of his glance. "I'm wondering if I'll ever laugh again."

Every one laughed at this, and Hewitt most of all. He was beginning to enjoy himself. Caste three was n't at all the ogre he had thought it; at least, it was n't when one could feel that he was having the support of people whom he might really like in a future when he should entirely lose his sense of strangeness.

A stream of repartee from Joe, in answer to Bob's insulting insinuations concerning his lack of wit, followed. Hewitt began to understand why caste three liked Joe. He would have been in it, anyway, Hewitt reconsidered, however, because of his grandmother. Most people in Alston grew into caste three. They did n't attain it; they inherited it, which made their positions easy and secure.

Hewitt wished he had been born into it, and instantly felt ashamed. That seemed like repudiating his poor, sick father and good old Grace.

The table became so noisy that Hewitt could turn to Susannah without notice.

"You are Mary Young's friend, are n't you?" she said, smiling deeply again. "Is n't Mary a dear?"

"I'm fond of her," Hewitt acknowledged. "She has a wonderful fascination for people, has n't she?"

"Yes. Everybody likes Mary. And she's so clever, and awfully intelligent."

"Is n't she?"

That was all, but it established a bond between them, this understanding that Mary Young was a lovely person for whom they both felt enthusiasm.

Susannah turned to talk to Martin Booth, and Hewitt was left to sit quietly, or to join in the general conversation.

From now on, with the Conners, he understood, on account of Mary Young he was to occupy exactly the position he made for himself. If he chose to be re-

tiring and diffident, he would be allowed to remain so. He would make himself count with these people, he resolved. He would show them! Not only Susannah and her mother, but the others. He was n't going to be a high-brow stick. He thought he had caught some suggestion of an accusation of that attitude in Joe's jest about never laughing again. Joe was not subtle enough for that, though, Hewitt decided.

"Too bad we have n't another Y. M. C. A. to help. Eh, Gray?" he laughed.

"I guess you thought that campaign was play."

"I liked it. I want another one."

"If you are so enthusiastic about soliciting donations, I can give you work any day in the week."

"Yes, Homer is chief of all organizations for begging money," declared Mrs. Conners.

"That's not because I like it."

"No, but because you are capable."

"Little Peggy Stewart is sick," Margaret Hawtrey mentioned. "I don't know why I thought of it."

"What's the matter with her?" Mrs. Conners asked, motioning the maid to remove the salad.

"She has typhoid, we're afraid. Mother was over there this afternoon. The doctor has n't pronounced it that, but Mrs. Stewart is afraid of it."

"That would be a shame."

"Peggy's going to be the best-looking girl in town when she grows up," Joe Bales warned them. "You girls had better hurry and get married. There won't be any men left for you."

"You won't be left, you mean, Joe," Helen told him.

"You can bet your best boots I won't. I was over to see her the other day."

"That's probably why she's sick," laughed Bob. "People can't look at you without getting sick, Bales."

"Anyway, I say it's a shame about Peggy. Hope it's not typhoid," Joe said. "She's a sweet little youngster."

"Typhoid's pretty bad," Hewitt put in. "My father has been ill with it for over two months. To-day is the first time he has sat up in a chair." His voice no longer sounded as if it were issuing from a well. It was deep and strong.

"That is a shame," Mrs. Conners smiled to him. "We all hope he gets well soon."

"His illness kept me from going to Chicago University this fall," went on Hewitt. The words were not spoken before he regretted them. They would think he was pulling a long face over doing his duty. So he went on to explain, and emphasized the cheerfulness of his voice. "I might have gone, I suppose, but I guess a man likes to know his children are near by when he's sick. Anyway, I would n't want to leave my sister alone with him while he was still so weak. The doctor says he will have to learn to walk all over again." Childish, he decided that last speech was. He would keep still for a while. Joe Bales and Martin Booth and Bob Hawtrey were n't telling their family troubles at a dinner-party.

But if Mrs. Conners thought Hewitt had been childish in his remarks about his father, she did not show it.

"Typhoid is dreadful," she said to him. "I should n't want Susannah ever to have it."

"I shall run and get it," her daughter returned, with mock seriousness, "if it is fashionable."

"All for the fashions, are n't you, Susie?" Joe Bales said, with an exaggerated grin.

Hewitt thought of Eleanor Rowe, though he could not have told why. Other girls had gone out with Joe, too, he felt sure, and then there were those Indianapolis excursions. Morals, considering Joe's case and Tom Brandon's and others he knew about, did n't make any difference about your acceptance in caste three. Other qualifications were what counted. A moral Hewitt might easily be less acceptable than a loose-moralled Joe. Joe was funny and easy, also an hereditary member of the group. That made the difference.

For the second time that evening Hewitt wished, and was promptly ashamed of so wishing, that he had been born into caste three. Of course overcoming deficiencies of training might make a man wise and strong, but one preferred to *belong* and be happy. Joe was happy, Hewitt felt certain. He could not imagine Joe as lying awake all night hating a girl who did n't love him. There were lots of girls in the world, Joe would have said. Neither could he imagine Joe as blaming fate for postponing a college course. Joe would have said that it did n't matter, that college could wait. Als-

ton was fun, anyway. And as far as Joe's figuring out what made people eligible for caste three — that thought was provocative of a smile. If chance had placed Joe outside, he would never have cared to get inside. Joe's position must be a comfortable one.

Hewitt wondered why some people were like Joe, and why some were like him. He would have traded dispositions with Joe and given him his bank-account to boot — a bank-account swelled by that extra hundred dollars his father had let him have from his future legacy. College might not make much difference in the long run, anyway. Why did people get educated, if not to be eligible for the social life which appealed to them? His old idea that knowledge was desirable in itself had been slowly fading. Why acquire more knowledge than would enable one to live in a manner in accordance with your desires? He wanted to read now, in order that he might talk about what he had read. Knowing things gave one prestige.

"I think being fashionable is interesting," Anne Miller volunteered, with a little toss of her fluffy hair. "I am comfortable when I know I am fashionably dressed, and I am awfully uncomfortable in old clothes, except at school and at the lakes, of course, where you don't think about clothes."

"Anne's a 'dinger' on the clothes question," said Joe, with a wag of his head. "She's right there every time. A veritable 'Vogue' among ladies!" He pronounced the "u" in the word, and thereby gained a laugh.

"I like my clothes," answered Anne, undisturbed.

"So do I, dear," Susannah said to her.

"You mean like your own or mine?"

"Yours. You have an air. No one in New York could approach you for pure style."

Anne examined Susannah for the purpose of discovering whether or not she was being jested with, but the latter's faint smile, always on her lips and so now indicative of nothing, puzzled her, and she turned away calmly to Martin Booth with a question about school.

During this exchange of pleasantries Homer Gray had been talking with great aplomb to his hostess. A sudden silence now brought his words to the rest of the table.

"I sometimes wonder just where this European question will land the dear old U. S. A.," he was saying. "There's that old problem over there about the 'balance of power.' Mr. Fairbanks, the former Vice-President, was discussing the matter with me the other day. He was making a trip through here, you know, and he stopped off with Mr. Keith. You see, the situation is like this: Germany has been growing stronger from year to year. England still controls the sea, but Germany has organization, wonderful internal organization. We can take notes on efficiency from Germany and learn a great deal. But we won't, of course. As Mr. Keith says, 'America is too cocksure of herself.' She has 'the egotism of youth,' as a famous New York publicist puts it. France has little war strength. Russia is negligible. That leaves

England and Germany. A young German girl who has been studying at Barnard told one of my Yale friends that her brothers, officers in the German army, had been called to the German frontiers three or four times during the last ten years. That looks as if Germany were getting ready for something."

"What does Germany want?" Martin Booth asked.

"Seaports and colonies."

"Let's give her a few," Joe suggested.

"Of course this is a European question. America is safe in her own hemisphere, unless Germany tries doing things in Mexico or South America. She won't, though. Germany is as crafty as Japan."

"How about Japan?" Hewitt asked.

"Japan will try now and then to take a piece of China. She is too clever to entangle herself with a real fighting power like the United States."

"I would n't be too sure about our standing army," Martin Booth said.

"Our standing army is not large, I admit. But, as C. J. Preston, who's been traveling in Europe during the last year, says, nearly every man in this country can handle a gun with some degree of skill. The greatest volunteer army in the world would arise to put down any power which threatened America. No power *will* threaten America. They're afraid to."

"But why go to war at all?" Mrs. Connors sighed.

"That's what a great many people in the world have been saying for the last decade. The time is ripe for a world peace, almost ripe."

"Then why not have peace?"

"Because two powers are not ready for peace."

"And they are?"

"Japan and Germany. They both want things. Their present situation is not satisfactory to them."

"You say, 'Peace! Peace!' and there is no peace!"

Joe exploded, misquoting a famous orator.

Hewitt, drinking his demi-tasse and nibbling at his cracker, almost choked at this remark.

"Be careful, Stevenson! You've performed once this evening," Joe warned him.

"It was n't really funny. You were just surprised, were n't you, Hewitt?" Susannah asked him. It was the first time she had addressed him by name, and her calling him "Hewitt" pleased him.

"I was astonished at the paradox of Joe Bales quoting Patrick Henry," he said, laughing.

"Ah ha!" Joe snorted, "Hewitt knows Patrick!"

"I once recited that speech at school, myself," Bob Hawtrey said. "I was immensely impressive at the end. I backed into the rostrum and fell down."

"What was impressed?" an innocent Joe queried. "The floor?"

"Raw, Joe," Martin accused him. "Let's have real wit, or none!"

"I think that was a very good joke, Joe!" Susannah said. "That is, for you," she added softly.

"Shall we continue this flow of cleverness in the parlor?" Mrs. Connors asked, rising. Homer Gray,

Hewitt noted, was quick to lift her chair back. He imitated this lead, and was close behind Susannah as she made her way to the door. Hewitt liked Susannah.

Music followed. Susannah sang some pretty songs which Hewitt approved. Joe Bales also had his opportunity to entertain, and played "Chop-Sticks" on the piano, using both hands, a feat that was roundly applauded.

"Consarn it, that's hard work!" he complained afterward. "It was hard to learn, too. Say, Susie, you taught me that, did n't you? Remember?"

Susannah did not.

"One night over at your house, after a dance. Don't you remember? Your father came downstairs in a bathrobe and sent me home, with kindly instructions not to wake the town thereafter."

Susannah did at length remember, and turned away toward the window. Hewitt wondered if she was still made sad by mention of her father.

Homer Gray presently reassumed his position as self-appointed leader of conversation. He did this by doing most of the talking himself, allowing the younger and less able of the group to put in questions from which he could develop a round talk. He spoke a good deal about vice-presidents and ex-governors and Yale professors. He casually introduced a Senator, and once he referred in a careless tone to so unimportant a public servant as a Congressman, but that individual was quickly passed over as being unworthy

of the serious attention of the author of a book and the prospective prosecuting attorney of Alston, if fate permitted.

Some of Hewitt's old dislike for Homer returned, but in the presence of the tolerance of the others, he buried it, and was glad to find that later it had not survived interment.

Susannah and Margaret were able to steal time from Mr. Gray's domination to speak about Wellesley and Smith and Muncie and New York, but not for long. They returned to the fold when Joe Bales wanted to begin an argument with Homer on the subject of coast defense, a subject about which Joe was entirely ignorant, but willing to talk. Susannah persuaded Joe that golf was more interesting as a topic, since everybody played golf — she had forgotten Hewitt — and only Homer knew about coast defenses. Hewitt even wondered if Homer did, but he inferred that the latter must have picked up some information from the leaders of the country on this point, since certainly so vital a topic had not been left undiscussed in the séances between Gray and the chief men of the day.

Golf lasted only a short while, because the weather was getting too bad for regular play. So Homer was in power again. Indeed, he had not given way, even to golf. He played very well. He had been runner-up in the Country Club tournament last summer, and might have come out winner, instead of in second place, if the roots of a tree had n't interfered with his stroke on the last hole.

Joe Bales took exception to this explanation, with his usual impudence.

"I suppose you should n't have got your ball among the roots," he said.

At which thrust Homer turned to Mrs. Conners to talk about other sports.

"I do hope we can skate this winter," Anne Miller wished.

"Maybe the city will flood Athletic Park again for a skating pond," said Martin. "I hope it will."

"Every one was skating in New York last winter," Susannah said, innocent of offense. But Joe was ready with a contemptuous, "What does a good Hoosier care about what old New York does!"

"We care a great deal," said Anne, with a toss of her head.

Hewitt readjusted his coat by lifting his shoulders, and then hoped that no one had noticed him. They might think he had the habit, and he had always held the opinion that any nervous habit was decidedly objectionable. But his coat did seem to creep down in the back. It was about time for him to speak up, too. He had made but one or two comments since dinner, and they had been to Susannah about her singing or about the music that was popular in Alston. He did n't approve of ragtime, he assured her. He was glad she sang really good music.

Mr. and Mrs. Hawtrej dropped in on their way home from a moving-picture show. Mrs. Hawtrej was soon deep in personal talk with Mrs. Conners in a corner,

and Homer Gray's leadership was superseded by the talkative Mr. Hawtrey, who insisted in telling in detail the story of the picture they had just seen.

"I tell you, that little girl gets me," he finished slangily. "She could have me any day. She's a little artist. Got a cunning way about her. Pigeon-toed, too. That gets a trifle tiresome, but she's pretty and attractive."

Every one seemed interested, except Hewitt, who considered that regular attendance at the "movies" numbed one's mind. He did not air his opinion, however, before people who seemed so wrapt up in moving-picture theaters. He remained silent. It did n't seem necessary to exert oneself to speak, now that Mr. Hawtrey was doing all the talking.

When the Hawtreys at last arose to take their departure, they insisted on taking Margaret and Bob with them.

"These youngsters have been out every night this week. I won't have it. Margaret thinks that because she is out of school, she can dissipate all the time. I won't have it. Get your hats, young ones."

The young ones were reluctant, but they obeyed a persistent and firm parent.

Helen thought she must go, too, shortly after their departure. Joe moaned, but said he would tear himself away, if she was sure her "mama" wanted her before ten. "She does, Joe, you know," Helen assured him. Martin Booth offered to take Anne home, if she was ready, and Anne decided that she was.

"One must n't stay too late at a dinner-party, I suppose," she sighed.

Hewitt became uneasy as this couple said good-night and departed. Only he and Homer Gray were left. It was time to go, but he was not exactly sure how to make the break. He set his coat right again, and rose, after Susannah had seated herself.

"Going my way, Gray?" he asked, with admirable abandon. "I go to Jackson."

"Yes, we can walk down together."

The formalities were creditably got through with, Hewitt felt, as the two made their way into the cold night air. Susannah had smiled at him with a deeper smile than he was sure ordinary politeness demanded, and Mrs. Conners had been charming to the end. He had told Susannah that he hoped she would let him come again.

Caste three had been very pleasant, Hewitt decided, as he walked alone up Jackson Street. They knew all the rules, and yet took liberties with them. That was why they were more fascinating than the severely respectable.

CHAPTER XXI

IN January Hewitt went to Chicago with less of a thrill than he had expected to carry to the city with a halo. He was sad about leaving Alston. He had an impulse to throw aside his plans about college and remain with Mr. Smith to guide the reading of the town. He was half-afraid that in his absence the good citizens might fall again into a poverty of literature. But Susannah was there to tend the flame,—if she remembered. She had proved a better pupil than Mary Young. She read nearly everything Hewitt suggested, and began to develop a power of critical comment that made him glow with pride in her.

“Is n’t it queer?” she had remarked with great perspicacity, after a thorough course in Maeterlinck and Shaw. “No writer gets all of life into his work, does he?”

That was profound, Hewitt decided, and also true.

“No, each one portrays a tiny section through his own temperament. If he tries to do more, he loses what the Germans call ‘viewpoint,’ and becomes valueless. He must, as Pater says, transcribe not the world, but his sense of it, to be an artist.”

“Who is Pater?”

"Walter Pater was an English critic who wrote a beautiful style and made brilliant critical decisions."

"How do you know so much more about literature than other people in Alston?" Susannah had inquired with innocent flattery.

"I am curious, and I am interested in art. Alston is merely interested in living."

"And can't people be interested in both things?"

"They *could* be interested, I suppose, but they don't seem to be. Some one has said,—Pater, perhaps,—that life is the enemy of art. Do you understand that?"

Susannah had pondered, her forehead on her hand.

"I think I do. You have to observe, instead of act, don't you, to be an artist?"

"Yes. It is a great deal like a florist with a plant. He plucks off shoots and buds, so that one flower may be large and perfect. Otherwise the plant has a great many mediocre blossoms, but no fine one. The artist has to have his life closely compressed into a narrow channel, so that the water is deep. I've changed figures of speech, but you understand, don't you? The artist's energies must be concentrated, rather than diffused."

"I wonder why Alston does n't have writers, as New York does?"

"American writers flock to New York. That seems to be the only place where they receive the stimulation they need to make them pluck off the other shoots and buds. In time Indiana will have great

writers, just as Scotland and Ireland do. Indeed, we have some who are now living below their possibilities, but who may in time reach higher levels. You have heard the New York joke that every new writer has spent some part of his or her life in Indiana, have n't you? There seems to be something in the rich soil here that grows writing persons."

"You will be a great writer some day, won't you?" Susannah had asked, with a repetition of her innocent flattery.

"Who knows? There are thousands of young men in Indiana with my possibilities. One or two out of the thousand, by virtue of chance and hard work and the knack of getting on, will succeed in being great or near-great in the literary field. I may or may not be one of them."

He remembered, as he rode to Chicago, that Susannah had been certain that he would be one to make a name for himself.

Hewitt spent two terms in the university, and then returned to Alston in June. Susannah was just back from New York, where she and her mother had been during the spring months.

Hewitt was glad to be back in Alston. It had become home to him. His father was strong again, and was happier than he had been the year before. He had bought more land next his garden farm and was working it himself, driving out from Alston in his buggy to his daily work.

In August Mr. Smith called Hewitt back to his desk

one day. He examined him from top to toe, in a way that reminded Hewitt of their first meeting. Then he said, "H'm," and spilled his spectacles down the front of his soiled vest.

"Want to have a talk with you, Hewitt."

"All the time in the world, Mr. Smith," responded Hewitt, sitting down at his typewriter. He looked more robust than he had the fall before, less obviously the studious boy and more the man.

"I've done a lot of thinking about you this winter. You had n't any business to leave me to run this store, while you went up to Chicago and enjoyed yourself playing around that university. You made me depend on you, and then you deserted me at the altar. It made me pretty mad. I've got a proposition to make to you. H'm."

He paused to clear his throat, and looked so hard into Hewitt's gray eyes that the latter laughed.

"I've always wanted that boy Blake to prepare to come back to Alston to run this business. I like this store. The Smiths have had it ever since there was an Alston. I like it. I'm attached to it. Now I have a proposition to make to you. Yes?" he called to Mrs. Chancellor, who had asked him a question from the front part of the store. "Yes, buy two. If the Presbyterian Church will have breakfasts, I s'pose we merchants must buy tickets. You can have them, Hewitt. Take your girl."

Hewitt was not made self-conscious by this allusion to Susannah Conners. He was beginning to take Su-

sannah and the jibes his "case" had brought forth as a matter of course. He rather liked them, it is feared. It made him feel important to have his name coupled with that of the most attractive young woman in Alston.

"Now about this proposition," Mr. Smith continued presently. "I've always wanted Blake to step in here, after he finished at Wisconsin, and take over the store. But Blake can't see it that way. He's got it in his head to study law and to go to Harvard for his degree. He's had it in his head for a good many years, and I've never tried to force him into my plans. It must be willingness on his part, or nothing. When you came in here, almost two years ago now, I knew you were the boy for the book business. You were interested in books, and you knew them well enough to be intelligent about selling them. I remember how Mrs. Stewart congratulated me about you on the first day I sent you up there to get an order. People saw that you knew what you were talking about. And that's what it takes to make a success in any business. I've been thinking all winter. I'd like to take a lease on this shoe-store room next door, north of here, rebuild the room so that it fits with this one, and then extend this store into both rooms. Then we could carry a bigger line of office-furniture and put in a finer line of stationery. Too many people have been sending to Chicago and Indianapolis lately for paper. We've got to swing the trade into line again.

"Now here's where you come in, Son. Your father

has money. I want him to put a few thousand dollars into this store for you, and let you enter the firm as a junior partner. I don't expect *you* to persuade him to do it. I'll talk to him myself. But I want to get your word first that you'll agree to give up this college business. You know more now than Homer Gray, and he went clear through Yale. I want you to agree to stop college and take up the business this summer. What do you say?"

"I'll have to have time to think about it, Mr. Smith," Hewitt said slowly.

Change the plans of his lifetime? And yet Hewitt wondered if those plans had been so vividly pressing during the last few months as they had been when he first came to Alston, before caste three had adopted him because Mary Young and Susannah Conners had taken him up. He wondered if he had n't wanted Mr. Smith to suggest something like this to him. He had been working even harder than he had the year before in the store. His life was filled with Susannah and caste three and work.

Hewitt's "thinking about it" included a talk with Susannah.

They were riding in the country the next Sunday afternoon in her "roadster." The road led over a picturesque bridge, and Hewitt stopped the car on the opposite side with the suggestion that they lock the motor and take a hike across the field and down to the woods on the other side. They looked particularly cool and inviting on such a warm August afternoon.

Susannah acquiesced, and they set out. Hewitt held her arm to help her over the rough land, and Susannah grasped her dress in her hand, to keep it from being caught on weeds and blackberry vines.

On the bank of the stream they sat down under a white-trunked sycamore tree.

"Is n't it pretty?" Susannah said, turning to smile at Hewitt.

"The woods?" he jested.

"*You* wouldn't want to be called pretty, would you?"

"Yes — by you!"

"Don't be silly, Hewitt!"

The word "silly" brought up another picture in which Mary Young was the principal figure. How much more pleasant was this than that! No turbulence, no violence in this love he felt for Susannah. He wanted to protect her, to take care of her, to keep her from being hurt. He wanted her confidence and her affection, but he was not helpless before his desire. He felt strong and manly, able to cope with the world for her sake.

"I'd like to be silly just once," Hewitt mused, watching the clear water where it trailed over clean rocks.

"Were n't you ever silly?" she asked.

"Oh yes."

"When?"

"Lots of times. I want to tell you something, Susannah!"

"What is it?"

Then, as he turned to look into her blue eyes, Susannah spoke quickly.

"Oh, I don't want to know," she said, and played with a leaf that she tore from a bush close by.

"Are you afraid of what I want to tell you?"

"No-o, not afraid. But you need n't say it yet."

"Why?"

"I can't tell you. I don't know what you are going to tell me, do I?" She raised her eyes and smiled whimsically at him.

"Yes, you do. Susannah, just how much do you like Alston?"

"Heaps! It's home. Mother and I stay in New York, but we always want to come back here. We've been here so long, you see."

"All of twenty years!"

"Mother and father were both born in Alston. Mother's father built that house the Y. M. C. A. has now."

"You like Alston pretty much, then, don't you?"

She nodded, and tore up the leaf.

"Would you ever want to live any other place — for good?" Hewitt asked, watching her face.

Susannah grew rosier under his eyes, and pulled at another leaf.

"Why?" she suddenly asked, brazenly.

"Susannah, do you think your mother would let you marry me, if you wanted to?"

"I don't know; I've never asked her."

They both laughed.

"Then I shall," Hewitt said.

"Don't!" Susannah commanded.

"Why? Don't you want to marry me?"

"I don't now," she said, in such a delicate voice that Hewitt had difficulty in catching her words and moved closer to hear.

He kissed her with some difficulty on the cheek, and Susannah arose quickly.

"Kiss me right, won't you?" Hewitt begged.

"What is 'right'?"

"This way."

After an hour of discussion they decided that Mr. Smith's plan was a very good one, because it meant that Hewitt would settle in Alston with prospects and they could be married the sooner.

"If mother does n't mind," added Susannah, "for she *does* believe in early marriages; but I think she likes you."

"*Think* she does?" stormed Hewitt. "I *know* she does!"

"She has n't ever led me to believe that," Susannah contradicted.

"She told *me* long ago."

"But you will be a writer some day, won't you, Hewitt?" Susannah pleaded. "Mary Young always said you would be one."

"We'll see," said Hewitt. He intended to be a writer. He would wait until he had acquired a great deal of solid wisdom. Then he would begin to write.

But he would wait. There was no need to overload a world, already weighted with mediocre literature, with more youthful ravings. He would wait until he became wise!

Mrs. Conners admitted, upon being put on trial, that she had no violent objection to Hewitt as a son-in-law, providing there was not to be a long engagement. She did n't believe in long engagements.

Hewitt then signified to Mr. Smith his willingness to become a junior member of the firm, providing his father could be persuaded to put another section of Hewitt's future legacy into the business. Mr. Stevenson, firmly satisfied with his return to real work and certain of an income from his land, consented to invest five thousand dollars for Hewitt, after a lengthy conference with Mr. Smith.

In September Mary Young came back to Alston to spend the winter. One afternoon Mrs. Conners suggested that the four of them — Hewitt, Susannah, Mary, and herself — motor to Indianapolis for dinner and go to the theater afterward.

Susannah drove the car, with Hewitt at her side, ready to take the wheel when she grew tired.

At six they were established at a table at the Severin. Hewitt had previously driven around to get tickets for the Little Theater.

Mary Young was as effervescent as ever. Time detracted no whit from her youthfulness. She was gayer than youth itself, with the added tactfulness of making others gay before her satisfaction became com-

plete. She bandied insults with Hewitt, until Susannah lost control of herself and laughed so loudly that her mother remonstrated, insisting that the head-waiter would want to remove the whole party.

Hewitt was very calm, and in fine mettle. Neither Mary Young nor any member of caste three could now deprive him of his wits. He had learned a great deal. He found that people are likely to take you at your own valuation, and he was valuing himself highly now. He might have been accused of "showing off" to Mary Young, who had not seen him for a year and so had missed the steps in his progress toward security of position in caste three in any place in the world.

Hewitt had found that if you belong to caste three in Alston, Indiana, money and its concomitant — the willingness to make a conspicuous expenditure — are the only necessary requirements for entrance into caste three in larger cities. Had he not been invited, upon his entrance into Chicago University, to join a fraternity that ranked above Kenneth Reed's in social prestige? He had learned to be stimulated in the presence of the unaccustomed, to desire the novel — except in the matter of love. He felt sure he would never desire any love except Susannah's.

Between courses Hewitt led Susannah to the part of the floor reserved for dancing. He danced splendidly. He had learned that, too.

Just before coffee was served, Hewitt offered his arm to Mary Young.

"I don't believe I've danced with you but once in

my life, have I, Mary?" he said, with a smile. "Try me again, will you? I'm afraid I was rather a boor at it that night at the Hawtreys."

"You a boor, dear?" Mary denied, laughing and pinching Susannah's ear. "Impossible!"

Hewitt thought, as he led Mary Young around the floor, that he had never danced with anyone who waltzed so perfectly. She *was* wonderful.

"I wonder if you knew what a miserable time I was having at Margaret Hawtreys's 'open house' that night?" he asked her while they danced.

"Why should you have been miserable?" Mary asked, sincerely puzzled.

"Because I danced so atrociously, in the first place, and in the second, because I was so violently in love with you,—you who did n't care whether I continued to exist, or died a pleasant death."

"You did n't dance atrociously, I am sure. I have no memory of it, at least. And I did care whether you existed. As for being in love with me, that's silliness!"

"I was silly, was n't I?"

"When, particularly?"

Hewitt, who had heretofore loathed references to personal, intimate things, now spoke calmly.

"That night, after the lights went out, when I kissed you. Then after the Hawtreys dance, when I exploded against you and you explained how you loved so many people."

Mary looked puzzled again.

"I can't remember the last, but I do recall having done something the night the lights went out that I was sorry for. We were hunting for candles, were n't we?"

Hewitt nodded.

"I was fond of you, Hewitt," she tried to convince him.

"Not in the way I wanted you to be."

"What way was that? I knew you didn't expect me to marry you. That would have been too silly."

"There's that word 'silly' again. I don't know what I wanted. I think I wanted you to adore me violently. I suppose that if you had, I would have been indifferent ever after. You were the unattainable, the beautiful. I was mad about you. I used to lie awake at nights and make myself sick analyzing you and hating you and loving you."

"You funny boy!" Mary murmured, putting her tongue between her teeth at Susannah as they danced near their table. "Is n't he a funny boy, Susannah?" she called.

Susannah nodded.

"Awfully," she said, smiling into Hewitt's eyes.

"Sweet Susannah!" Mary murmured, as they moved away from her. "At any rate, you are n't miserable now, are you?"

"Not exactly," laughed Hewitt.

"I think your ever having been in love with me is a chimera of your vivid imagination. You probably never were."

Hewitt understood that any affection Mary had had, or still had for him, was very different from sexual love.

"I was, but I'm not," he said easily.

"Susannah, of course!" sighed Mary, mockingly. "What chance has age beside such radiant youth? Is n't she adorable in blue?"

"I was just mentioning to your fiancé that you should n't ever wear blue, dear, because it throws my age into such contrast," she said to Susannah when they returned to the table.

"Age, Mary?" put in Mrs. Conners, with a shake of her head at the irrepressible girl. "You are so much younger than these grown-up children. You will *never* grow old!"

CHAPTER XXII

IN the end the crowd had its way with the alien who might have been the intellectual leader of mediocrity. Right thinking—*c'est le bonheur d'homme quand il pense juste*, as the French say, after Socrates. That is, man's happiness depends on thinking rightly.

Alston, Indiana, pointed to other methods of contentment, however. There was the content of playing golf and dancing and dining, of being diverted by bridge, of working that one might play, of tying oneself in a net of community interests, of taking one's cue from other cities and thus developing one's own city. Perhaps that is a fine way to live.

Hewitt, the alien, was only an outlander, a foreigner, until he found his place, an important, desirable, and contentful place, in caste three. The true intellectual is forever the alien to every class. Hewitt, however, had found his class.

Can't you see him, loving not only Susannah, but all that she represents—the gaiety, the cheerfulness, the common-sense, the small luxuries of living, the ignorance of deep sorrows?

Susannah gaily takes life as it comes. She plays golf, goes motoring, and dances, bears children and

rears them — all gladly and unquestioningly. Great books are something outside of herself, which she reads and ponders over and asks her husband about. They are nothing else. They do not guide her life, or even turn its course. There will never be a revolt in her for imagined beauties that have been denied her. She is content.

Hewitt will accept her two-generation traditions — none are firmer — and sink into the restfulness of the superficial. As he grows older he will be swathed in the content of possessing some money,— his own and Susannah's,— a pretty wife, social children, and a pleasant home. He will read less and less poetry, assuring himself that only the discontented break forth into poetic expression, forgetting that in the past he, too, had searched for ideal beauty and been "divinely discontented." He will read less and less philosophy, science, and literature, remaining firm in the conviction that his own ideas are final and adequate. He will talk politics, with no new point of view, partisan politics, at the Alston Club while he plays billiards. He will be elected treasurer of the Country Club, and eventually he will become a member of that eminently capable body, the Alston School Board. He will be a loyal rooter for a greater Alston. At first a fighter and later an acceptor of the evils of prostitution, his voice will be added to that of other members of the Library Board in refusing to tolerate sex novels of the more radical type on the library-shelves to corrupt the sixteen-year-old. He will be the good citizen with

a large voice in the management of the affairs of his city.

Hewitt will be on the committee to welcome a far-distant Presidential candidate to Alston. The man will, indeed, ride in the Stevensons' new motor to the Court House, and perhaps he will dine at the Stevensons' new home on Eighth Street. Hewitt will head the contribution list for the Presbyterian Church, he and Susannah having decided that it is, after all, more convenient and esthetically more satisfying than the older Methodist form. He will be one of those business men who are surety for the success of the "Chautauqua," which yearly invades Alston in August with a call to a bigger outlook. He will forget about Nietzsche and Plato and Walter Pater and Amy Lowell. He will be so successful, so conventional, so the leading citizen of Alston, Indiana!

Hewitt will have paid for his figs — such expensive figs.

In the spring after his marriage to Susannah at the Methodist Church, Hewitt returned to the Harrow house — the Connors had decided to keep it until they could build — from the store late one afternoon with a bad headache. Susannah was disturbed and sympathetic. She put him to bed and tucked in the covers about his neck lovingly, kissing him on his aching eyes for good measure.

"You want the shades drawn, don't you, dear?" she asked softly.

"Please. The light drives me mad," Hewitt said, and tried not to sound mournful.

Susannah laid a cold cloth across his eyes and left him, because he felt better alone, he told her.

Hewitt lay there in the darkened room, almost happy, except when his nerves suddenly became a single string upon which the entire scale of pain was played. Then he moved restlessly and writhed for a moment; but the pain passed and he again lay quiet. Presently he fell asleep.

Darkness was heavy in the room when he awoke, and Susannah was standing over him with the delicate smile which was little more than a negation of seriousness. Hewitt tried to smile at her as she switched on the lights, but instead his face became distorted with pain.

"This beastly headache!" he exclaimed.

Susannah turned off the lights, except one in a bedroom lamp with a yellow shade on the dressing-table.

Hewitt was exceedingly hungry. There was a gnawing at his vitals which seemed to make his headache worse. He lay quiet, however, while Susannah sat on the bed and rubbed his head with her fingers.

The gnawing grew more painful. Hewitt gasped with the pain in his head.

Susannah kissed him.

"Could n't I get you something to eat, dear? Perhaps you could eat something now, and then your head would get better."

Hewitt demurred. He was too ill to eat, he as-

serted. Susannah insisted. At length he consented to make the attempt.

Susannah went downstairs. During her absence Hewitt had distinctly pleasant impressions of her goodness, of her kindly ways, of her hair that was darker than golden, with the bright streaks over her temples. He thought of her mother. A fine woman; an ideal mother-in-law! There were no jars in this household, where every one said cheery "good-mornings" and "good-nights," and every one highly approved of every one else. He remembered that Grace had always been sullenly averse to conversation at breakfast, and that his father was equally silent, or was prone to speak on fertilizers. How good Susannah was!

Hewitt felt almost able to get up when he heard Susannah's footsteps on the stairs, but he remained in bed with the wet cloth over his eyes. He was, indeed, hardly able to look upon the food on the mahogany tray, not because he had any interest to deceive Susannah about his appetite, but because it seemed scarcely proper to display too intense desire for food when he had a headache. Susannah might doubt that he was ill, and he was very ill. His head seemed at times about to split open. But he was ravenously, unreasonably hungry.

Susannah took the cloth from his eyes and kissed him again.

"Now, darling, you will eat something, won't you?"

Hewitt was able, after the pillow had been patted

into a renewed fluffiness and supplemented by another one, to sit up and have the tray placed across his sheeted and counterpaned knees — a tray covered with immaculate damask and decorated with a silver sugar-bowl, a cream-pitcher, and a rose from a bouquet he had sent Susannah for her birthday. Hewitt had fallen easily into the way the Connors had of celebrating numerous anniversaries, although his own family had never exchanged gifts, except at Christmas.

He closed his eyes at the pain which rising to a sitting posture had caused him. Nausea assailed him. He asked Susannah to take away the tray. He could not eat, not even beef-tea and wafers and a browned young chicken and milk. He was too sick.

Susannah looked sad, and removed the tray two feet. Perhaps he could eat in a minute, he told her, seeing that she was saddened by his decision.

At last he did eat everything, while Susannah sat in a chair close by and observed him.

He attempted to be jocular, when she stood up to take away the tray with its empty dishes.

"That was a fine square meal, dear. I think I can get up now."

Susannah protested against such indiscretion. Hewitt insisted. She forced him to stay in bed "for my sake, darling." He remained in bed.

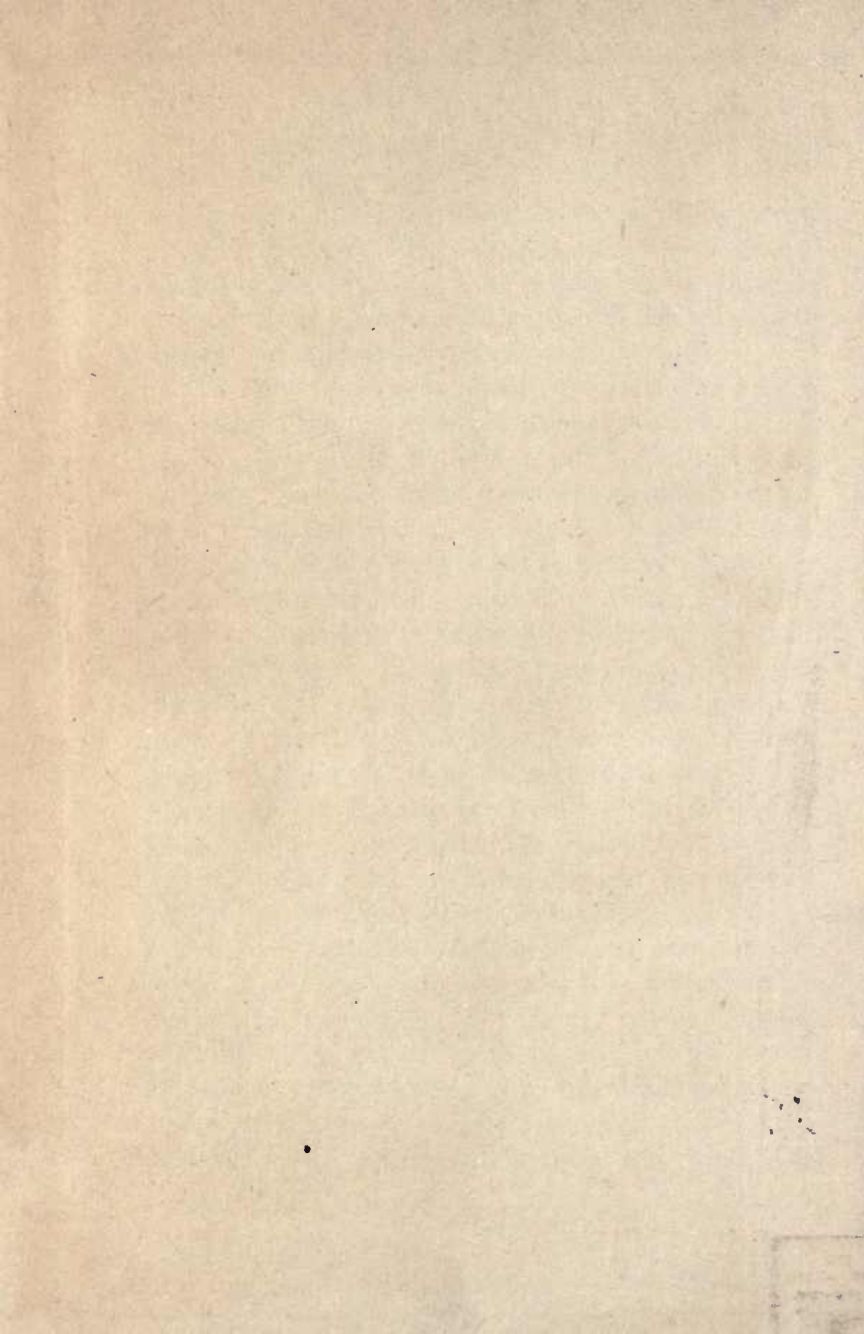
The pain had been alleviated by the appeasing of his appetite. His head hardly hurt at all now. Susannah turned out the light and left him.

"You must go to sleep again," she said, and closed the door gently.

She had opened the curtains, and a spring breeze played with the rose Hewitt had fastened to the coat of his pajamas. He slipped the under-pillow to the floor and lay down again, a soothing sense of intense satisfaction enveloping him. Life was so good!

The faint voices of children were carried to Hewitt by the light wind. Suddenly one began to cry. How sad that any one should cry on such a pleasant spring evening, when the world, despite a warring Europe, seemed peaceful and quiet. He remembered a night in his own childhood when his father had wanted him to eat bread, and he had refused to change his diet of peaches and cream. The tragedy of leaving the table, inflamed, gulping, hating, and then choking back sobs while he sat on the edge of his little bed in a back room of the farmhouse and gazed dry-eyed into the gathering darkness. The tragedies of childhood!

A sensation of being far from the disturbing troubles of other days came over Hewitt. Calm, protected, dictating maturity had brought him figs and taught him the rules! Few of those disturbing moods which had made his adolescence sad bothered him now. There was no discontent such as strives to move mountains, no poetics, no strong, balked emotion. Hewitt, the hugger of the shore, was safe in the harbor of the commonplace. The town had conquered, and figs and Susannah! His jelly-fish soul was become of a pink prettiness that suited the town's taste.



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